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BY REV. JOHN A. BROADUS, D.D., LL.D.

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A TREATISE

ON THE

PREPARATION AND DELIVERY

OF

SERMONS.

BY

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LOUISVILLE, KY.

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PREFACE.

THIS work is designed, on the one hand to be a text-book for classes, and on the other to be read by such ministers, younger or older, as may wish to study the subjects discussed.

As a teacher of Homiletics for ten years, the author had felt the need of a more complete text-book, since a course made up from parts of several different works would still omit certain important subjects, and furnish but a meagre treatment of others, leaving the class to a great extent dependent entirely upon the lectures. The desire thus arose to prepare, whenever possible, a work which should be full in its range of topics, and should also attempt to combine the thorough discussion of principles with an abundance of practical rules and suggestions. When the labor involved in teaching this and at the same time another branch of Theology became excessive, and it was necessary to relinquish Homiletics — though always a favorite branch — the author determined, before the subject should fade from his mind, to undertake the work he had contemplated.

The treatise is therefore a result of practical instruction, but it is not simply a printed course of lectures. The materials existing in the form of brief notes have been everywhere rewrought, the literature of the subject carefully re-examined, and the place which had been occupied by text-books, filled by an independent discussion.

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Those who may think of employing the work as a textbook are requested to note, that it is divided into independent Parts, which, while arranged in the order indicated by the nature of the subject, may be taken up in any other order required by the exigencies of instruction. Some would prefer to begin with Arrangement, in order that students may at once have the benefit of this in preparing sermons or sketches. Others might begin with Style, in order to general exercises in composition; and possibly others with Delivery. The author would himself prefer if using the book, to take, after the Introduction, the first three chapters of Part I, and then Part II and perhaps other portions before completing Part I. The cross references from one part to another will be found somewhat numerous. In the plan of the work, a few instances occur of departure from a strict technical distribution of the topics, for the sake of practical convenience. Thus the matters embraced under Illustration, Expository Preaching, or Imagination, would strictly belong to several different parts of the work, but it is practically better to discuss all at the same time.

It may be necessary to explain the introduction of copious chapters on the Interpretation of a Text, and on Argument. The former subject is discussed in treatises on Hermeneutics. But besides the fact that not a few of those who use this book will not have previously studied Hermeneutics, those who have done so may be interested and profited by a discussion bearing more directly on the work of preaching; and such students will be able to read the chapter rapidly. Much improvement has been made during the past century in respect to pulpit interpretation, but it is a point as to which our young ministers still need to be very carefully guarded. The subject of Argument is thought by some to be out of place in a treatise on Homiletics or on Rhetoric in general. But preaching and all public speaking ought to be largely composed of argument, for even the most ignorant people constantly practice it themselves, and always feel its force when properly presented; and yet in many pulpits the place of argument is mainly filled by mere assertion and exhortation, and the arguments employed are often carelessly stated, or even gravely erroneous. Treatises on Logic teach the critical inspection, rather than the construction of argument, and so the latter must be discussed in works on Rhetoric, if anywhere. The well-known chapters of Whately have been here freely employed, but with very large additions, and with the attempt to correct some important errors The examples of argument given are nearly all drawn from religious truth. With these explanations it is left to instructors to use or omit these portions of the work at their pleasure.

But the great mass of young ministers, particularly in some denominations, never study Homiletics under a teacher, whether they have or have not enjoyed a Collegiate education. The attempt has been everywhere made to adapt the present work to the wants of these students, as well as the purposes of a text-book. They will choose for themselves what portions to take up first, but such as have had no College education may be urged not to abandon the book without reading the discussion of Arrangement and Style, as well as of Interpretation, Subjects of Preaching, and Argument. For the sake of those who have enjoyed few advantages, occasional explanations have been introduced, which other readers would hardly need.

Those who have had much experience in preaching often find it interesting and useful to examine a treatise on the preparation and delivery of sermons. New topics and new methods may be suggested, things forgotten or hitherto neglected are recalled, ideas gradually formed in the course of experience are made clearer and more definite, and where the views advanced are not deemed just, renewed reflection on some questions need not be unprofitable. Moreover, the desire for high excellence in preaching may receive a fresh stimulus. Such readers will remember that many practical matters which to them have now become obvious and commonplace, are precisely the points upon which a beginner most needs counsel. And while there are in the present treatise numerous divisions and subdivisions, so marked as to meet the wants of students, the attempt has been made to preserve the style from becoming broken and unreadable.

The author's chief indebtedness for help has been to Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, and to Whately and Vinet. The two last (together with Ripley) had been his text-books,—and copious extracts are made from them on certain subjects. A good deal has been derived from Alexander, Shedd, Day, and Hoppin, from Coquerel and Palmer, and a great variety of other writers, as the Index will show. Besides quotations, there are numerous references to works in which may be found some impressive statement of similar opinions, or further considerations bearing on the subject in hand. Only such references have been given as it was thought really worth while for the student to consult. At the close of the Introduction, there is a list of the principal works forming the Literature of Homiletics, with brief notices of their character and value. It is believed that to give in a treatise some account of previous works on the subject, as judged from the author's point of view, is a thing appropriate and calculated to be useful. Such notices, in the case of contemporary writers, ought not to be reckoned discourteous if they frankly express disapprobation in some respects as well as praise in others. Were they somewhat more extended, these critical appreciations would be more useful. Besides this general account of the literature, essays and treatises upon particular branches of Rhetoric or Homiletics are briefly characterized in foot-notes, upon the introduction of the respective topics. Two important and valuable works, McIlvaine on Elocution (New York, 1870), and Dabney's Sacred Rhetoric (Richmond, 1870), were received after the Introduction was stereotyped, but are noticed in Part IV, chapter II, and were made useful in that and the following chapters. Two articles published by the author in the Baptist Quarterly for January, 1869, and January, 1870, have been incorporated into the work, with the necessary rewriting; and some articles forming other portions of it have appeared in the Religious Herald, and the Central Baptist. The author is grateful to his colleagues and his pastor, for sympathy in his undertaking and for valuable suggestions. The Index has been prepared by the Rev. John C. Long, of Virginia.

Special pains have been taken, at the proper points of the treatise, to give practical suggestions for extemporaneous speaking. Most works confine their instruction as regards the preparation of sermons to the case of writing out in full; and many treat of delivery, as if it were in all cases to be reading or recitation. The effort has here been to keep the different methods in view, and to mention, in connection with matters applicable to all alike, such as apply to one or another method in particular.

As to many of the practical questions connected with the preparation and delivery of sermons, there is much difference of opinion; and an experienced preacher in reading any treatise on the subject, must find points here and there which he would prefer to see treated otherwise. He would decide whether, notwithstanding, the work is likely to be useful. In the present case, criticism, whether favorable or adverse, would be welcomed. Where the author is in error, he would greatly prefer to know it. Where the views presented are just, they may become more useful through discussion.

No one could prepare a work on this subject without feeling, and sometimes deeply feeling, the responsibility he incurred. It is a solemn thing to preach the gospel, and therefore a very solemn thing to attempt instruction or even suggestion as to the means of preaching well.

July, 1870.

NOTE. — There are several classes of persons besides ministers, to whom portions of this work may perhaps prove acceptable and useful.

The treatises on Rhetoric now studied, in schools and College, are nearly all designed to prepare the student for writing, rather than distinctively for speaking; and *speakers* upon whatsoever subject, may really find more of what they need in a book on preaching. The ablest lawyers and statesmen have often studied sermons, as specimens of eloquence; why not learn something from treatises on the preparation and delivery of sermons? The portions which might be recommended to this class are after the Introduction, Part I, chapters 4–8; Part II, chapters 1 and 2; Part III; and Part IV; and these may be taken in any order.

Lay preachers, and persons desirous of speaking in public on religious subjects, might be not a little helped by the first three chapters of Part I, by Part V, and by such other portions of the work as they may find time to read.

To Sunday-School teachers are recommended Part I, chapters 2, 7, and 8, with the close of chapter 3; and Part V.

Intelligent Christians, of both sexes, must be often grieved at the false estimate of preaching, the wrong notions of what it is, and what it ought to be, which are so prevalent. By reading something practical on the subject, they would be better prepared to sustain those who preach properly, and to improve the tone of social conversation in regard to this matter. They might also become more sympathizing and appreciative hearers; and good listeners are, in proportion, quite as rare as good preachers. To these are recommended the Introduction; Part I, chapters 1–4, 7 and 8; Part II chapter 3; Part IV; and Part V.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE PREPARATION AND DELIVERY OF SERMONS.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. Importance of Preaching and Difficulty of Preaching well. § 2. Nature of Eloquence. § 3. Requisites to Effective Preaching. § 4. Origin of the Rules of Rhetoric. § 5. Dangers of Rhetorical Studies. § 6. Relation of Homiletics to Rhetoric. § 7. Literature of Homiletics.

PREACHING is characteristic of Christianity. No false religion has ever provided for the regular and frequent assembling of the masses of men, to hear religious instruction and exhortation.* Judaism had something like it in the prophets, and afterwards in the readers and speakers of the synagogue; but Judaism was a true religion, designed to be developed into Christianity.

The great appointed means of spreading the good tidings of salvation through Christ is preaching—words spoken, whether to the individual, or to the assembly. And this, nothing can supersede. *Printing* has become a mighty agency for good and for evil; and Christians should employ it, with the utmost diligence and in every possible way, for the spread of truth. But printing can never take the place of the living word. When a man who is apt in teaching, whose soul is on fire with the truth which he trusts has saved him and hopes will save others, speaks to his fellow-men, face to face, eye to eye, and electric sympathies flash to and fro between him and his hearers, till they lift each other up, higher and higher, into the intensest thought, and the most impassioned emotion — higher and yet higher, till they are borne as on chariots of fire above the world,— there is a power to move men, to influence character, life, destiny, such as no printed page can ever possess. *Pastoral work* is of immense importance, and all preachers should be diligent in performing it. But it cannot take the place of preaching, nor fully compensate for lack of power in the pulpit. The two help each other, and neither of them is able, unless supported by the other, to achieve the largest and most blessed results. When he who preaches is the sympathizing pastor, the trusted counsellor, the kindly and honored friend of young and old, of rich and poor, then "truths divine come mended from his lips," and the door to men's hearts, by the magical power of sympathy, will fly open at his word. But on the other hand, when he who visits is the preacher, whose thorough knowledge of Scripture and elevated views of life, whose able and impassioned discourses have carried conviction and commanded admiration, and melted into one the hearts of the multitude, who is accustomed to stand before them as the ambassador of God, and is associated in their minds with the authority and the sacredness of God's Word, — when *he* comes to speak with the suffering, the sorrowing, the tempted, his visit has a meaning and a power of which otherwise it must be destitute. If a minister feels himself specially drawn towards either of these departments of effort, let him also constrain himself to diligence in the other.

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* Comp. Vinet, p. 21.

Religious *ceremonies* may be instructive and impressive

The older dispensation made much use of these, as we employ pictures in teaching children. Even Christianity, which has the minimum of ceremony, illustrates its fundamental facts, and often makes deep religious impressions, by its two simple but expressive ordinances. But these are merely pictures to illustrate, merely helps to that great work of teaching and convincing, of winning and holding men, which preaching, made mighty by God's Spirit, has to perform.

It follows that preaching must always be a necessity, and good preaching a mighty power. In every age of Christianity, since John the Baptist drew crowds into the desert, there has been no great religious movement, no restoration of Scripture truth, and reanimation of genuine piety, without new power in preaching, both as cause and as effect.

But alas! how difficult we find it to preach *well.* How small a proportion of the sermons heard weekly throughout the world are really good. The dilettanti men of letters who every now and then fill the periodicals with sneers at preaching, no doubt judge most unkindly and unjustly, for they purposely compare ordinary examples of preaching with the finest specimens of literature, and they forget their own utter lack, in the one case, of that sympathetic appreciation without which all literary and artistic judgment is necessarily at fault; but we who love preaching and who try to preach are better aware than they are, of the deficiencies which mar our efforts, and the difficulties which attend our work. A venerable and eminently useful minister once remarked, as he rose from the couch on which he had been resting, "Well, I must get ready to preach tonight. But I can't preach—I never did preach—O, I never *heard anybody* preach."

And yet in this work of ours, so awful and so attractive, so difficult and solemnly responsible and yet so blessed, we ought to aspire after the highest excellence. If in other varieties of public speaking, then most of all in this, may we adopt Cicero's words with reference to the young orator, "I will not only exhort, but will even beseech him, to labor." *

§ 2. NATURE OF ELOQUENCE.

What is good preaching? Or, more generally, what is eloquence? This is not a merely speculative inquiry, for our fundamental views on the subject will influence, to a greater extent than we may be aware, our practical efforts. Without reviewing the copious discussions of the question, the following statement may be offered: Eloquence is so speaking as not merely to convince the judgment, kindle the imagination, and move the feelings, but to give a powerful impulse to the will. All of these are necessary elements of eloquence, but that which is most characteristic is the last. There may be instruction and conviction without eloquence. The fancy may be charmed, as by a poem or novel, when you would not think of calling it eloquence. The feelings may be deeply stirred, by a pathetic tale or a harrowing description, but no corresponding action being proposed, we do not speak of it as eloquence. On the other hand, it is not strictly correct to say that "eloquence is so speaking as to carry your point;" for there may be an invincible prejudice, or other insuperable obstacle, as, for example, a preacher may be truly eloquent, without actually inducing his hearers to repent. There must be a *powerful impulse* upon the will; the hearers must feel smitten, stirred, moved to, or at least moved towards, some action or determination to act. Words that by carrying conviction, kindling imagination, and arousing emotion, produce such an effect as this upon the will, are rightly called eloquent words. Augustine says, *Veritas pateat, veritas pla*

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* Cic. de Or. II, § 85.

ceat, veritas moveat, "Make the truth plain, make it pleasing, make it moving."

Eloquence, then, is a practical thing. Unless it aims at real and practical results, it is spurious. Mere holiday eloquence does not deserve the name. And the preacher who kindles the fancy of his hearers merely for their delectation, who stirs their passions merely to give them the luxury of emotion, is not eloquent. There is too much preaching of just this sort. Besides vain pretenders who care only to please, there are good men, who, if they can say very handsome things, and can make the people *feel,* imagine that they are preaching well, without inquiring *why* the people feel, and to what truly religious ends the feeling is directed. It is a shame to see what vapid and worthless stuff is often called eloquence, in newspaper puffs, and in the talk of half-educated younglings, returning from church.

Eloquence is a serious thing. You cannot say that a discourse, or a paragraph, is very amusing and very eloquent. The speaker who is to deserve this high name, must have moral earnestness. He may sometimes indulge, where it is appropriate, in the light play of delicate humor, or give forth sparks of wit, but these must be entirely incidental, and subordinate to a thorough seriousness and earnestness. Theremin, in his useful little treatise, "Eloquence a Virtue," insists that eloquence belongs to the ethical sciences, the character and spirit of the speaker being the main thing. The theory is an exaggeration, but contains an important element of truth, as Quintilian already had partly observed.*

"What is the true ground of eloquence," says Vinet, "if it is not commonplace? When eloquence is combined with high philosophical considerations, as in many modern examples, we are at first tempted to attribute to philosophy the impression we receive from it; but eloquence is something more popular; it is the power of making the primitive chords of the soul (its purely human elements) vibrate within us — it is in this, and nothing else, that we acknowledge the orator."* It is impossible to be eloquent on any subject, save by associating it with such ideas as that of mother, child, friends, home, country, heaven, and the like; all of them familiar, and, in themselves, commonplace. The speaker's task is, by his grouping, illustration, &c., and by his own contagious emotion, to invest these familiar ideas with fresh interest, so that they may reassert their power over the hearts of his hearers. He who runs after material of discourse that shall be absolutely new, may get credit for originality, and be amply admired, but he will not exert the living power which belongs to eloquence. The *preacher* can be really eloquent only when he speaks of those vital gospel truths which have necessarily become familiar. A just rhetoric, if there were no higher consideration, would require that a preacher shall preach the gospel — shall hold on to the old truths, and labor to clothe them with new interest and power.

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* Quint. Int. XII, 1, "An orator is a good man, skilled in speaking." This, he says, was Cato's definition. Prof. Shedd's Introduction to Theremin gives some very good thoughts on the nature of eloquence.

§ 3. REQUISITES TO EFFECTIVE PREACHING.

They may be stated as four, viz. piety, natural gifts, knowledge, skill.

(1.) Piety. Men sometimes do good by preaching who turn out to have been destitute of piety. It is one of the many wonderful ways in which God brings good out of evil. But such cases are exceptional, and as a rule, the prime requisite to efficiency in preaching is earnest piety. This inspires the preacher himself with ardent zeal, and keeps the flame alive amid all the icy indifference by which he will so often be encompassed. This gains for him the good-will and sympathy of his hearers, the most ungodly of whom will feel that devout earnestness on his part is becoming, and entitles him to respect. And this is authorized to hope for the blessing of God upon the labors which it prompts. Much false theory and bad practice in preaching is connected with a failure to apprehend the fundamental importance of piety in the preacher. As was said above on a kindred topic, just rhetorical principles, as well as other and far higher considerations, imperatively require that a preacher of the gospel shall cultivate personal piety. It is *bad rhetoric* to neglect it.

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* Vinet, Hom. p. 176, note.

(2.) Natural gifts. The preacher needs the capacity for clear thinking, with strong feelings, and a vigorous imagination; also capacity for expression, and the power of forcible utterance. Many other gifts help his usefulness, these are well-nigh indispensable to any high degree of efficiency. Each of these can be improved almost indefinitely, some of them developed in one who had not been conscious of possessing them; but all must exist as natural gifts.

(3.) Knowledge. There must be knowledge of religious truth, and of such things as throw light upon it; knowledge of human nature in its relations to religious truth, and of human life in its actual conditions around us. It was a favorite idea of Cicero that the orator ought to know everything. There is of course no knowledge which a preacher might not make useful. We may thankfully recognize the fact that some men do good who have very slender attainments, and yet may insist that it should be the preacher's lowest standard to surpass, in respect of knowledge, the great majority of those who hear him, and should be his sacred ambition to know all that he can learn by life-long and prayerful endeavor.

Piety furnishes motive power; natural gifts, cultivated as far as possible, furnish means; knowledge gives material; and there remains

(4.) Skill. This does not refer merely to style and delivery, but also to the collection, choice, and arrangement of materials. All who preach eminently well — and the same thing is true of secular speakers — will be found, with scarcely an exception, to have labored much to acquire skill. Henry Clay, in an address to some law-students at Albany towards the close of his life, mentioned that during his early life in Kentucky, he "commenced, and continued for years, the practice of daily reading and speaking upon the contents of some historical or scientific book. These off-hand efforts were made sometimes in a cornfield, at others in the forest, and not unfrequently in some distant barn, with the horse and the ox for my auditors." We are told that the Indian orators of the Six Nations were known to practise their speeches beside a clear pool. "Patrick Henry, the most illustrious example of natural oratory, so far as there is any such, went through a course of training in his daily studies of human nature as drawn out by himself in his little shop, his every-day trials on his lingering customers of the power of words, his deep and enthusiastic investigations into history, and particularly his patient and continued study of the harangues of Livy and the elaborate translations he made of them, which, to say the least, is very uncommon."* Any one whose good fortune it has been to be intimate with some of those noble Baptist preachers, who beginning with hardly any education have worked their way up to the highest excellence in their calling, will have seen ample proofs, particularly in their unrestrained private conversation, that their power of clear and precise expression, and of forcible and attractive delivery, is the result of sharp, critical attention, of earnest and long-continued labor. The difference between skill and the lack of it in speaking, is almost as great as in handling tools, those, for example, of the carpenter or the blacksmith. And while no real skill can be acquired without practice — according to the true saying, "The only way to learn to preach is to preach" — yet mere practice will never bring the highest skill; it must be heedful, thoughtful practice, with close observation of others and sharp watching of ourselves, and controlled by good sense and good taste.

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* Day's Art of Discourse, p. 18.

Now in respect of skill, preaching is an *art;* and while art cannot create the requisite powers of mind or body, nor supply their place if really absent, it can develop and improve them, and aid in using them to the best advantage. To gain skill, then, is the object of rhetorical studies, skill in the construction and in the delivery of discourse.

§ 4. ORIGIN OF THE RULES OF RHETORIC.

(1.) The rules of Rhetoric are properly the result of induction. They are sometimes spoken of as if they had been drawn up by would-be wise men, who undertook to tell, on general principles, how one *ought* to speak. But they simply result from much thoughtful observation of the way in which men *do* speak, when they speak really well. Every one will sometimes see occasion to depart from these rules; but he ought to understand that in disregarding the "rules of Rhetoric," he is not nobly spurning artificial fetters and barriers, but simply turning aside, for the time, and for good reason, from the path in which it is usually found best to walk. And to do this will be wise or not wise, according as there is real occasion for it, and it is well managed. So too, we notice, men of sense often exactly conform to these rules, without knowing anything about them; for this is only saying that they speak exactly as men of sense usually do.*

(2.) What we call rules are but the convenient expression of a principle. They put the principle into a compact form, so as to be easily remembered and readily applied. But the rule, however judiciously framed, can never be as flexible as the principle it represents. There will therefore be cases, and as regards some rules many cases, in which one *may violate the rule and yet be really conforming to the principle*, these being cases in which the principle would bend, and adapt itself to peculiar conditions, while the rule cannot bend. This consideration explains many of the instances in which a speaker produces a powerful effect though utterly violating the rules of rhetoric. Other such instances are explained by the sort of shock produced by a departure from what is usual, as the sleeping miller will wake when the mill stops. And in still other cases the effect is produced by a man's power in other respects, *in spite of* the particular violation of rule.

§ 5. DANGERS OF RHETORICAL STUDIES.

(1.) Thinking more of the form than the matter. Rhetoric has to do with the use we make of material, the choice, adaptation, arrangement, expression. But after all, the material itself is more important. We hold that Demosthenes did not mean to contradict this, when he said (if he ever did in fact say it), that the first thing, second thing, third thing in speaking is delivery. He took the other for granted. No man has ever surpassed Demosthenes, in thorough mastery of the subjects upon which he spoke. But delivery had been with him a matter of peculiar difficulty, his deficiencies in that respect had defeated his early attempts, and his subsequent excellence had been gained only by enormous labor; it was natural that he should lay stress upon its importance, supposing that no man of sense could overlook the necessity of being fully acquainted with his subject. Now the things which ought *most* to be thought of by the preacher, are piety and knowledge, and the blessing of God. Skill, however valuable, is far less important than these; and there is danger that rhetorical studies will cause men to forget that such is the case. It is lamentable to see how often the remarks upon preaching made by preachers themselves, in conversation and in newspaper critiques, are confined to a discussion of the performance and the performer. Unsympathizing listeners or readers have, in such cases, too much ground for concluding, that preachers are anxious only to display skill, and gain oratorical reputation.

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* Comp. Whately's Rhetoric, p 33 ff

(2.) Imitation. All are aware that there is both a conscious and an unconscious imitation. That which is unconscious is of course not so blameworthy, but it cannot fail to be injurious, and it is a subtle evil which should be guarded against with the sharpest self-inspection. Every one observes, too, that imitators are especially apt to imitate a man's faults. The reason is easily seen. The excellencies of a good speaker are apt to be symmetrical, while his faults are salient, prominent. The latter, therefore, will most readily attract unconscious imitation. As to the conscious imitator, he is sure to be a superficial observer, who will think that what he notices most in some admired speaker is the secret of his power, and will go to imitating that. Besides, it is *easier* to ape the single, salient fault, than the symmetrical combination of many excellencies.

Is the danger of imitation increased by attendance upon institutions of learning? Hardly. He who is so susceptible on the one hand, or on the other hand so silly, as to fall readily into it, will find some one to imitate, wherever he may be. Every country district has some favorite preacher, whom others around may be seen to imitate. When many of these imitators are gathered at a public institution, the men they imitate are fewer and more generally known, and therefore the fact attracts more attention. On the other hand, they are more likely to have pointed out to them the danger and the evils of imitation, so as utterly to eschew that which is conscious, and promptly to correct the unconscious, when made aware of it. Nor is there any greater danger of such imitation at a theological institution than at a college or university. Still, some men are very liable to this fault, and when about to hear the same speaker several times a week for many months, all ought to be on their guard against imitating his peculiarities.*

(3.) Artificiality. There is much artificiality which ought not to be called by the odious name of affectation. The speaker's motives are good; he merely errs in judgment and taste. But a great error it is. In all speaking, especially in preaching, naturalness, genuineness, even though awkward, is really more effective for all the highest ends, than the most elegant artificiality. "But it is the highest art to conceal art." Nay, no art *can* conceal art. We may not perceive it, but we dimly, instinctively feel that there is something the matter, and perhaps wonder what it is; somehow, the preacher's well-meant efforts are failing to reach their aim. The danger of artificiality in speaking is very great. When one begins, he is apt to feel awkward in the new and strange situation. As one unaccustomed to riding on horseback must *learn* to sit naturally, and feel at ease, in the saddle, so very many speakers, perhaps all, have to *learn to be natural.* They must not only reject all intentional artificiality, but must carefully guard against that which is undesigned and unconscious. To forget self, because full of living desire to do men good, is the great means of being natural. It follows that a preacher ought never to preach merely for practice; this will inevitably tend to encourage artificiality. The first few efforts of a young man — which will often go much farther than he is at the time aware to form his habits for life — ought to be genuine, *bona fide* preaching. If he ever preaches in the presence of none but his fellow-students and instructors, it ought to be only upon a subject thoroughly suited to *their* religious wants, and with a most earnest and prayerful effort to do them good.*

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* "Melanchthon carried one shoulder higher than the other, and the pupils believed themselves Melanchthons if they imitated his posture." Hagenbach, Homiletik, s. 142. Spurgeon's students are constantly accused of imitating him. Those who are anxious on this subject ought to be apprised of another danger, which they may not have thought of. A year or two ago, a certain professor heard one of his students preach several times at a protracted meeting, and then preached himself. In the midst of the sermon, he caught himself distinctly imitating certain peculiar tones of his esteemed young brother. Think of that! The professors may imitate the students!

As regards all that pertains to preaching, and especially delivery, our efforts at rhetorical improvement must be *mainly negative.* We endeavor to gain correct general principles, and some idea of the errors and faults to which speakers are generally liable. We then speak, aiming to be guided by these principles, and to correct our faults as they may arise. It is unwise to set up at the outset some standard of excellence, and aim to conform to that. If one should take a fancy that cedar trees are more beautiful than oaks, and attempt to trim his oaks into the shape, and color them into the hue, of cedars, the result could only be ridiculous. Let the young cedar grow as a cedar, and the young oak as an oak, but straighten, prune, improve each of them into the best possible tree of its kind. And so as to speaking, be always yourself, your actual, natural self, but yourself developed, corrected, improved into the very best you are by nature capable of becoming.

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* It is believed that the plan of causing students to preach before the class results, upon the whole, in more harm than good, and that it ought to be avoided. Let them preach where it can be real preaching, or not at all. Even the debating society proposes a present end to be gained, and awakens some living interest

§ 6. RELATION OF HOMILETICS TO RHETORIC.

The Greek word *homilia* signifies conversation, mutual talk, and so familiar discourse. The Greek writer Photius (9th cent.) says of Chrysostom's expository sermons on Genesis, that he finds the book bearing the name of discourses, but that they are much more like homilies (talks), because he so often speaks as if seeing the hearers before him, asks questions, and answers, and makes promises, &c., and because they have not the formal arrangement of discourses.[*] The Latin word *sermo* (from which we get *sermon*) has the same sense, of conversation, talk, discussion, &c. It is instructive to observe that the early Christians did not apply to their public teachings the names given to the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, but called them *talks*, familiar discourses. From this word *homily* has been derived the term *homiletics*, as denoting the science or art of Christian discourse, or a treatise on that subject, embracing all that pertains to the preparation and delivery of sermons. Homiletics may be called a branch of rhetoric, or a kindred art. Those fundamental principles, which have their basis in human nature, are of course the same in both cases, and this being so, it seems clear that we must regard homiletics as rhetoric applied to this particular kind of speaking. Still, preaching is properly very different from secular discourse, as to the primary source of its materials, as to the directness and simplicity of style which become the preacher, and the unworldly motives by which he ought to be influenced. And while these and other peculiarities do not render it proper to treat homiletics as entirely distinct from rhetoric,* they ought to be constantly borne in mind by the student of homiletics and by the working preacher.†

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[*] See Suicer's Thesaurus, II, p. 474.

§ 7. LITERATURE OF HOMILETICS.

It is proposed to mention the works which are believed to be most worthy of the student's attention.

I. *General Works on Rhetoric.*

Aristotle's Rhetoric ought by all means to be studied, in a translation (as that of Bohn's Library), if it cannot be read in the original. Longinus on the Sublime is celebrated and interesting. The other extant works of Greek rhetoricians are not of the highest value.

Cicero's treatises on Oratory (de Oratore, Orator, and Brutus) are quite unsystematic and incomplete, but are full of striking thoughts and useful suggestions. Quintilian's "Instruction of the Orator" is a systematic treatise on grammar and rhetoric, abounding in good sense, and more valuable than those of Cicero. Horace's Ars Poetica is well known to contain many capital precepts as to composition of every kind. The Dialogue on Orators, usually printed with the works of Tacitus, is not now believed to have been written by him, but was written in his age, and is in certain respects quite valuable.

These great Greek and Roman works are not superseded by the modern books which have drawn from them so largely, and they ought to be carefully studied by all who desire to be well acquainted with Rhetoric. It is too common to eulogize famous books, and yet never read them.

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* As proposed by Kidder, p. 19 ff.

† Nothing would really be gained by substituting, as some German writers propose, the term keryktik, from the Greek *kerux*, a herald, and in the N. T. a preacher.

Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric contains much thorough discussion and judicious suggestion, and is of permanent value. Whately's Rhetoric is believed to be the best treatise for practical use that has appeared. Especially valuable are the portions on Argument and on Style. Theremin's Eloquence a Virtue, translated by Shedd, with a good Introduction, is a small volume which may be read with great profit. Quackenbos' Composition and Rhetoric is a good school-book, and may also be used with great advantage in self-training by those who wish to supply deficiencies of early education. Bain's Composition and Rhetoric (1866) treats with great fulness the nature and use of rhetorical figures, and the subject of style in general; and appears to contemplate mainly the composition of scientific works, history, and poetry. Haven's Rhetoric (1869) is almost entirely confined to style, including words and figures. Day's Art of Discourse (2d ed. 1868) gives unusual attention to the Invention of Materials, and presents much that is quite valuable.

Goodrich's British Eloquence is an admirable collection of speeches, with introductions and notes enabling one to understand them, and very useful to the student of eloquence. And after all, nothing in respect of secular oratory is so valuable as the thorough study of Demosthenes, even in a translation. It should be preceded and accompanied by Vol. XI of Grote's Greece.

II. *Works on Homiletics.*

Chrysostom on the Priesthood, is a charming little work, and contains several excellent remarks on Preaching. (Some of these are quoted by Kidder, p. 76.) The original may be had in a separate volume, and it has been newly translated into English by B. H. Cowper. Augustine was a teacher of Rhetoric before his conversion, and in his treatise *De Doctrina Christiana,* "On Christian Teaching," he devotes Book IV to instruction in the "setting forth" of Christian truth, giving many interesting and useful thoughts. This book is translated in the Biblical Repository, Vol. III, p. 569, and a good analysis of its contents given by Moule, p. 169 (see below).

French Writers. Fenelon's Dialogues on Eloquence are very readable, and excellent on some points. They are given in the good collection entitled "The Preacher and Pastor," New York, 1849, and in many other forms Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon is quite valuable, and has exerted a wide influence. The author was a great Protestant preacher in the age of Louis XIV. The best of the many editions in English of his brief essay, is that of the famous Robert Robinson, with copious notes, crammed with curious learning. Vinet's Homiletics is a posthumous and incomplete work, but on some subjects is the best treatise on Homiletics in existence, particularly on the selection and interpretation of Texts, and on subjects of Pulpit Discourse. Monod's Lecture on the Delivery of Sermons, is singularly good. Adolphe Monod was one of the first pulpit orators of the present century, and delivered this lecture when Professor in the French Protestant Theological School at Montauban. It is published as an Appendix in Fish's Select Discourses from the French and German. The little work of Coquerel, Observations sur la Prédication (Observations on Preaching), Paris, 1860, has not been translated, but ought to be. It is a spirited treatise, pungent, suggestive, and quite useful.

German. It is proper to mention the most recent and valuable treatises. Palmer's Homiletik is by a popular Lutheran writer; the 5th edition (1869) is considerably enlarged. Hagenbach, the celebrated writer on Church

History, and belonging to the "Reformed," or Calvinistic party in Germany, has a small volume, Liturgik und Homiletik, containing much that is quite good. The Germans usually discuss Homiletics in treatises on "Practical Theology" in general. The most recent, Otto's Evangelische Praktische Theologie (1869) is unusually full on this subject, and on several branches of it is decidedly able. The Praktische Theologie of Ebrard (1854) is comparatively meagre on Homiletics, but has spirited remarks and suggestions.*

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN.

Campbell's Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence are not unworthy of the author of the Philosophy of Rhetoric, being judicious and useful, while quite brief. They are given in "The Preacher and Pastor" (see above under Fenelon). Porter's Lectures on Homiletics are very sensible and valuable, but not a complete treatise, many important topics being entirely omitted. The author was Professor at Andover, and the first American who prepared a systematic work on Homiletics. It is out of print in this country, but an English republication can still be had. Gresley's Treatise on Preaching has been reprinted in this country. The author was a clergyman of the Church of England, and his volume (a series of Letters) is specially adapted to the wants of the English clergy, but is decidedly valuable to all, and written in an agreeable style. John Angell James' Earnest Ministry, a widely circulated and useful book, discusses several questions of Homiletics.

Ripley's Sacred Rhetoric, with Ware's Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching, is a useful little volume, giving many excellent practical rules and suggestions, but limited in its range of topics, and frequently too brief in the treatment of them. The author is Professor at Newton, and well known for his practical commentaries. Thoughts on Preaching, by James W. Alexander, is a posthumous volume, consisting of Review articles, Letters, and a series of detached observations which the author was collecting for a proposed treatise on Homiletics. It contains a number of highly valuable thoughts. Henry Rogers has an Essay on the British Pulpit, in his volume entitled "Reason and Faith, and other Essays," which make some excellent points. Papers on Preaching and Public Speaking, by a Wykehamist, (London, 1861,) is a small but excellent work, unsystematic, but sensible and sprightly.

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* That of Nitzsch is frequently commended, but the present writer cannot speak of it from personal knowledge.

Of the most recent works, Wayland's Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel, 1864, is an admirable little volume. There are also good thoughts on Preaching in his Principles and Practices of the Baptists. Kidder's Homiletics, 1864, is by a Professor in the (Methodist) Biblical Institute at Evansville, Illinois. It is more complete in its range of topics than any other treatise on Homiletics, is for the most part well arranged, and contains much that is useful; but it is very unequal in its discussions, and the views presented of some subjects are regarded as objectionable. There is an excellent Appendix on the Literature, and many interesting and valuable extracts are given in another Appendix, or scattered throughout the book. Potter's Sacred Eloquence, Dublin, 1866, is a Roman Catholic work, and contains some good remarks, with various striking quotations from Catholic writers. Shedd's Homiletics and Pastoral Duties, 1867, discusses certain topics with the author's well-known power of analysis and vigor of statement. It is an excellent book to be read by those who are acquainted with the subject in general, or to be studied in connection with some systematic treatise. Lamps, Pitchers and Trumpets, by E. P. Hood, London, 1868, is the whimsical title given to Lectures before the students of Spurgeon's College. It is not at all a complete or systematic treatise, nor anywhere strikingly able; but it is highly entertaining, and full of quaint extracts, from all manner of sources. It has been republished in America. Discussions in Theology, by Thomas H. Skinner, (New York, 1868,) contains two papers on Preaching which are very instructive, and unusually devotional in their tone. The author is the translator of Vinet, and Professor in the Union Theological Seminary, New York. Hoppin's Office and Work of the Christian Ministry (New York, 1869) is divided between Preaching and the Pastoral Office. The treatise on Preaching is in its arrangement very faulty and inconvenient; but the particular topics are discussed with marked ability and sound judgment, and show a good acquaintance with the literature of the subject. The author is Professor in the Theological Department of Yale College, and designs his work especially to be a text-book for classes. The portion on Pastoral Duties is well arranged, and probably the best treatise in existence on that subject.

The following works ought also to be mentioned, because they are at present frequently met with in this country. Russell's Pulpit Elocution is perhaps the best treatise on its subject, but that is not saying very much. Sturtevant's Preacher's Manual is a large volume, of but little value. Bautain on Extemporaneous Speaking has some good suggestions. Mullois' The Clergy and the Pulpit is entertaining, but not particularly instructive. Zincke's Duty and Discipline of Extemporary Speaking is useful to persons who have the established habit of reading sermons, and wish now to adopt extemporizing.

Of works on the History of Preaching, there may be named: Moule's Christian Oratory during the First Five Centuries, Cambridge and London, 1859, an excellent little volume; Neale's Mediæval Preachers and Preaching, London, 1856, which is less valuable; and Fish's Masterpieces of Pulpit Eloquence, 2 vols. 8vo, New York, 1856, (new edition in one volume, 1869,) which contains excellent specimens of sermons from all ages, with brief biographical sketches of the several preachers, and good essays on the Pulpit of different periods and countries, and is a very useful work. More complete treatises on the History of Preaching are found in German, as those of Paniel, Lentz and Nesselmann.*

Besides treatises on Preaching, the chief sources of instruction in Homiletics are as follows: (1.) The Preaching that we hear, when heard with fraternal sympathy and prayerful desire for spiritual benefit, and yet with critical attention. (2.) Published Sermons, the value of which is readily acknowledged. (3.) Biographies of Preachers, which to one having a general knowledge of Homiletics, are often surpassingly instructive. (4.) The criticism of instructors or judicious hearers upon our own preaching. (5.) Careful observation of our faults, as developed in actual practice, with resolute and patient effort to correct them.

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* A much more copious list of works on Homiletics may be found in Kidder's Homiletics, Appendix. The present list was designed, as intimated at the outset, to include only those which for some reason are thought specially worthy of notice, with brief statements as to their value, founded on personal examination. It is believed to omit very few works which now possess other than a mere curious interest. Various treatises and essays on particular branches of Homiletics are mentioned below under the appropriate heads

PART I.

MATERIALS OF PREACHING.

CHAPTER I.

THE TEXT—SELECTION.

§ 1. MEANING OF TERM. § 2. ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A TEXT § 3. RULES FOR THE SELECTION OF A TEXT.

§ 1. THE word *text* is from the Latin *textus* or *textum*, something woven, thus denoting the web of discourse.* It came to be used, as it still is, for the connected discourse upon which commentary is written, successive portions of this connected whole being separately taken and remarked upon. Thus we speak of the text of Scripture, the Greek text, the sacred text, as opposed to comments, translations, and other modes of using it. So as to oral exposition, comment, etc. And in any such case, the text which one treats, in a written or an oral exposition or discussion, might be not necessarily the whole text of Scripture, but the text of a particular book, paragraph, or sentence. There is always the same contrast, between the text treated and our treatment of it.† The history of the word, like that of *homiletics*, points back to the fact, which is also well known otherwise, that preaching was originally expository.

The early Christian preachers commonly spoke upon passages of considerable length, and occupied themselves largely with exposition. Frequently, however, as was natural, they would find a brief passage so fruitful as to confine themselves to it. Usage tended more and more toward the preference of short texts. In England in the 17th century, it was not uncommon to make many sermons on some brief passage. Thus John Howe has fourteen sermons on a part of Rom. 8 : 24, "We are saved by hope;" seventeen on 1 John 4 : 20; and eighteen on John 3 : 6. The object was to make a complete discussion of some great topic, and to bind all the discourses into a whole by connecting all with the same text. But this practice conflicted with the natural love of variety. It is usually much better to make a series appear such by the manifest relation of the subjects, and to choose for each discourse a separate text, which presents the particular subject or view there discussed. This is at present the common practice, it being a somewhat rare thing now to preach more than one sermon on the same brief text. There is also a tendency at present to return to the more frequent use of long texts.*

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* Comp. texture, context, etc.

† Hagenbach has explained the word correctly (Hom. s. 96) Shedd (Hom. p. 159) has clearly mistaken it.

§ 2. ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A TEXT.

It is manifest that to take a text gives a certain air of sacredness to the discourse. But more than this is true. The primary idea is that the discourse is a development of the text, an explanation, illustration, application of its teachings. Our business is to teach God's word. And although we may often discuss subjects, and aspects of subjects, which are not presented in precisely that form by any passage of Scripture, yet the fundamental conception should be habitually retained, that we are about to set forth what the text contains. When circumstances determine the subject to be treated, and we have to look for a text, one can almost always be found which will have some real, though it be a general relation to the subject. If there be rare cases in which it is otherwise, it will then be better to have no text than one with which the subject has only a fanciful or forced connection. There are several advantages in regularly taking a text. (1.) It constantly recalls the fact just mentioned, that our undertaking is not to guide the people by our own wisdom, but to impart to them the teachings of God in his Word. This fact enables us to speak with confidence, and leads the people to recognize the authority of what we say. (2.) If the text is well chosen, it awakens interest at the outset. (3.) It often aids the hearer in remembering the train of thought, having this effect wherever the sermon is really evolved from the text. (4.) It affords opportunity of explaining and impressing some passage of Scripture. (5.) It tends to prevent our wandering utterly away from Scriptural topics and views. (6.) Greater variety will be gained than if the mind were left altogether to the suggestion of circumstances, for then it will often fall back into its old ruts; and this variety is attained just in proportion as one restricts himself to the specific thought of each particular text.

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* Compare below, Part II, chapter 3, § 3, on Expository Sermons

Objections to the use of texts have commonly arisen from one of two or three causes. The grievous laxity in the interpretation of texts which has so widely prevailed, leads some men to regard the employment of them as wrong or useless. This is the old story — the abuse of a thing causing men to question the propriety of its use. Again, persons who have little or no true reverence for Scripture, or appreciation of its riches, speak of the text as a restriction upon freedom of thought and flow of eloquence. Thus Voltaire: "It were to be wished that Bourdaloue in banishing from the pulpit the bad taste which disgraced it, had also banished the custom of preaching on a text. Indeed, to speak long on a quotation of a line or two, to exhaust one's self in subjecting a whole discourse to the control of this line, seems a trifling labor, little worthy of the dignity of the ministry. The text becomes a sort of motto, or rather enigma, which the discourse develops."* It seems plain that this sneer arose partly from the torturing interpretation so often witnessed, and chiefly from the critic's want of reverence for the Bible, and ignorance of the preacher's true relation to the Bible. And perhaps, as a third ground of objection to texts, some able and devout preachers, disliking expository and even textual preaching, and wishing that every sermon should be a philosophical discussion or an elaborate discourse upon a definite topic, incline to regard the custom of always taking a text as an inconvenient restriction. Such appears to have been the feeling of Vinet.

It is sometimes not unsuitable to have two texts, or even more. Thus with Heb. 9 : 22, "And without shedding of blood is no remission," there might be united 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Or with Isa. 6 : 3, "The whole earth is full of his glory," may be taken Psa. 72 : 19, "And let the whole earth be filled with his glory;" to angelic eyes it is so — the human mind can only pray that it may be so. (Comp. Hab. 2 : 14.) Spurgeon has a sermon on the words, "I have sinned," as occurring seven times in the Bible, and gives interesting views of the different circumstances and states of mind in which they were uttered.†

§ 3. RULES FOR THE SELECTION OF TEXTS.

The proper selection of a text is a matter of great importance. A felicitous choice will animate the preacher throughout the preparation and the delivery of his sermon, and will help him to gain at once the attention of his hearers. There are few points as to which preachers differ more widely in talent and skill, than the selection of texts, and few in which diligent and systematic effort will be more richly rewarded. The minister, or student for the ministry, should keep a blank book for lists of texts. In reading the Scriptures and books of Theology, in reading collections of sermons, biographies, and newspaper notices, in casual reflection and in the preparation of other sermons, passages will be constantly occurring upon which it strikes one that he could make a sermon. Let these be at once written down in the list. Let the preacher constrain himself to do so, until it becomes a habit. And he should by all means put down at the same time, however briefly, the proposed outline of the discourse, or any specially valuable view or illustration of it, which he is not *sure* will return to his mind whenever the text is looked at. Otherwise he will afterward find many passages in the list that it will seem strange he should ever have noted, because the association will have been broken, the point of view will have disappeared. At some times the mind is in a highly creative mood, and plans of sermons or suggestive texts or topics will rapidly succeed one another, as the preacher reads, reflects, or visits from house to house. These fruitful germs should be carefully husbanded, and the lines of development indicated. And often when one is cold and lifeless, and could at the moment produce nothing, some good thought which was struck out in a happier mood will fall into his mind like a spark, and presently set it all on fire. Many an admirable text, and many a golden thought, given to men in their better moments, are lost forever, when a brief record, or even some little effort to associate them in mind with other things, might have made them a permanent possession.*

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* Voltaire, Age of Louis XIV. Quoted by Vinet, Hom. p. 99

† Amer. ed. of Spurgeon's Sermons. Third Series, p. 241

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* For numerous striking specimens, not of texts but of thoughts thus recorded, see Life of John Foster, Vol. I., p. 108-156. Compare Alexander, Thoughts on Preaching, p. 513.

To aid in the selection of Texts, there are offered the following rules.

1. The text should not be obscure. It ought, as a rule, to exhibit its meaning readily. Otherwise, the people will either be repelled by what they see no sense in, or will be apt to feel a merely idle curiosity to know what in the world the preacher will make of that. Still, there are important exceptions here. If the preacher is satisfied he can explain an obscure passage, and can show that it teaches valuable truth, he may take it. If the passage is one about which many are known to feel interested, and he is really able to make its meaning clear, and bring out useful lessons, it may be very wise to employ it. But observe the stress that is laid on the practicability of making the passage instructive and useful. To explain merely for the sake of explaining, is a task for which the preacher scarcely has time. It is his business to teach the people lessons of real utility, either as regards doctrine or practice.*

2. One must be careful as to employing texts "marked by grandeur of expression. They seem to promise a great effort." † And if great expectations are excited at the outset, it is of course very difficult to meet them. Yet no one would say as a rule that such texts must be *avoided.* Many of the noblest and most impressive passages of Scripture rise into a natural grandeur of expression, and there would be serious loss in habitually avoiding these. Sometimes we may find a simpler text that presents the same subject, and the grander passage can be introduced somewhere in the course of the sermon. But when such a passage is made the text, we may prevent any undesirable effect by announcing it with unaffected modesty, and by

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* See further in what is said on Expository Preaching, Part II chapter 3.

† Ripley.

the general tone of the introduction; perhaps even saying — not as an apology but a quiet remark — something to the effect that of course none of us can rise to the height of this great passage, and yet it may do us good to meditate upon its teachings. We must carefully avoid whatever course would savor of display, but must not fastidiously shrink from treating any passage which we may hope to make useful.

3. It is scarcely ever proper to choose a text that will seem odd. When humor is employed in preaching it ought to be an incidental thing, and manifestly unstudied. It is so natural for some men to indulge in quaint, and even in very odd sayings, they so promptly and easily fall back into their prevailing seriousness, that the humorous remarks are unobjectionable, and sometimes, through the well-known relation between humor and pathos, they heighten the effect. But an *effort* to be amusing, anything odd that appears to have been calculated, is felt to be incompatible with a genuine seriousness and solemnity. Now the text has of course been deliberately chosen, and an odd text must therefore have a bad effect. Yet there are sayings of Scripture that seem quaint, which an earnest man may employ to good purpose. For example, William Jay has a good sermon upon Hos. 7: 8, "Ephraim is a cake not turned."

Some instances of ludicrous texts and subjects may be given, as a matter of curious interest. It is told in Virginia that a preacher of a belligerent and unpopular denomination went to a village where there were but two churches. The Presbyterian minister, Mr. Sparrow, and the Baptist, Mr. Fox, both refused him the use of their houses of worship. So he preached in a school-room, and took as his text, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." A good hit, no doubt, but rendering it nearly impossible that the sermon should make any true religious impression. An ignorant Methodist preacher in the same State chose as his text, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not," and occupied himself with various things that Enoch was not — he was not a drunkard, he was not a liar, he was not a profane swearer, etc. The words "Let him that is on the house top not come down," quoted in the form, "Top-not, come down," and used for a sermon against a certain style of head-dress called a "top-knot," would seem to be the very climax of absurdity; and yet many a passage has been mutilated and applied in a way fully as unwarrantable, though less ridiculous. Some one has fairly satirized a certain style of historical sermons by proposing such subjects as the following: Adam the grandfather of us all, and the duties of grandparents. Noah the first Sea-captain. Nebuchadnezzar the first pure Vegetarian. Felix the free-lover, etc. etc. William Jay, who was sometimes inclined to carry this sort of thing quite too far, once announced his intention to preach on the words, "Take it by the tail," said to Moses with reference to the serpent (Exod. 4: 4). Not even his ingenuity and devotedness could have saved this from being intolerable. Coquerel* tells of a Reformed pastor at Amsterdam a century ago, who was famous for boldness and humor, and being once at the Hague, was greatly importuned by the wits about the court of the Stadtholder to preach the next Sunday. He finally consented on condition that they should all attend, and take no offence; and giving as his text the account of Philip and the officer of Queen Candace, he announced the following plan of discourse: "I find in this narrative four subjects of astonishment which go on increasing the one upon the other. 1. A courtier who reads the Scriptures, which is already surprising. 2. A courtier who acknowledges his ignorance, which is more surprising still. 3. A courtier who asks his inferior to instruct him, which must cause a redoubled surprise. 4. And that this surprise may reach its climax, a courtier who is converted." Admirable wit, but hardly suitable as a sermon. Shedd† tells of a preacher in the reign of Charles II, who selected "Seek first the Kingdom of God," and urged that as it is not the *parliament* of God, but the *kingdom*, therefore kingly government is most in accordance with the divine will. Also of a sermon to a newly married couple on Psa 72 : 7, "And abundance of peace so long as *the moon* endureth." It is said that the celebrated Wetstein, when under trial at Basel, had among his opponents a copper-smith, and that he preached on 2 Tim. 4 : 4, "Alexander the copper smith, did me much evil the Lord reward him according to his works." * Such stories are more numerous than useful, and there is only added the mention of a fashion of *alphabetical* preaching, which has been sometimes practised. Thus the word "grace" is made the text, and the letters of the word give the divisions—great grace, rich grace, almighty, covenant, eternal grace. A venerable minister states that he once heard an ignorant Baptist preacher treat in this fashion the word "salvation"—*s* is safe salvation; *a*, almighty salvation; and so with long, vast, almighty (as before), and at length *t*, 'tarnal salvation; *i*, infinite salvation; "and the last two letters, to be brief, we will take together—*o n*, 'onorable salvation."

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* Obs. sur la Préd. p. 96.

† Hom. p. 170

In respect of such cases, we must judge others leniently, and ourselves strictly. The allowableness of oddity depends greatly upon differences of taste and circumstances. But the man who is tempted, in our time and country, to deal in deliberate oddities in order to *strike*, would do well to recall Cowper's words,

"'T is pitiful
To court a grin when you should woo a soul."

One sees the attention that is excited, and is apt to hear of any good done, by sermons disfigured by oddity or other improprieties; but he seldom hears of the persons, perhaps many persons, who were repelled, shocked, driven away from him, and in some cases driven away from the gospel.

4. Do not avoid a text because it is familiar. What has made some texts familiar to all, but the fact that they are so manifestly good texts? It is a very mistaken desire for novelty which leads a man to shrink from such rich and fruitful passages as "God so loved the world," etc.; "This is a faithful saying," etc., which Luther used to call "little Bibles," as if including in their narrow compass the whole Bible.† He who will turn away from the tradition of the pulpit as to the meaning and application of such passages, and make personal and earnest study of them, will often find much that is new to him and his hearers, as the skilful

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* Hagenbach, Hom. s. 105.

† See Hood, Lamps, Pitchers, &c., p. 591.

gold-hunter in California will sometimes follow in the very track of many searchers, and gain there his richest harvest. Besides, what we need is not absolute novelty, but simply freshness. If we can manage, by prayerful reflection, to obtain such views and provide such illustrations of a familiar text as will give it a fresh interest to ourselves and the hearers, then all the riches of the passage are made available for good. Alexander * calls attention to the fact that of the great sculptors and painters many took the same themes; and so with the Greek tragedians. He remarks: "Some, anxious to avoid hackneyed topics, omit the greatest; just as if we should describe Switzerland and omit the Alps." In point of fact, the great preachers, all the best preachers, do preach much upon the great texts and the great subjects. How is a feebler man ever to develop his own strength, unless he grapples with great themes? One may show skill, and add somewhat to the harvest, by cultivating out-of-the-way corners and unpromising ledges of rock; but the bulk of the crop, by which the family are fed, must come from the broad, open field.

5. Do not habitually neglect any portion of Scripture. Some neglect the Old Testament, thus losing all its rich unfolding of God's character and the methods of his Providence, all its unnumbered illustrations of human life and duty, and its many types and predictions of the coming Saviour. Others preach on the Old Testament almost exclusively. These are either men who take no delight in the "doctrines of grace," in the spirituality of the Gospel; or men devoted to fanciful allegorizing, who do not enjoy the straightforward teaching of Christ and his apostles, so much as their own wild "spiritualizing" of everything in the Old Testament history, prophecies and proverbs.†

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* Thoughts on Preaching, p. 10–12.

† Comp. Hagenbach, s. 102.

✓ Let us not neglect either of these great divisions of God's own Word. And so as to particular books. In the course of a good many years a preacher ought to have taken some texts from every portion of Scripture, though he will of course choose most frequently from those books to which attention is directed by his peculiar mental constitution and tastes, or by their comparative richness in evangelical and practical matter.

6. Do not take spurious passages. A favorite text with many is Acts 9 : 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This is unquestionably spurious, and these words should never be quoted as Scripture; yet essentially the same thought is expressed in Acts 22 : 10, "What shall I do, Lord?" as uttered on the occasion of Paul's conversion. The famous passage in 1 John 5 : 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," is also spurious beyond question. The passage in Acts 8 : 37, "And Philip said: If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," has the evidence so overwhelmingly against its genuineness that it ought not to be used as a text.*

7. The sayings of uninspired men, recorded in Scripture, ought not to be used as texts unless we know from other teachings of Scripture that they are true, or unless we

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* There is no more occasion for uneasiness at the fact that errors are found in the *common text* of Scripture, than in the *current translations*. Men who are well aware of the latter fact, and not disturbed by it, are sometimes shocked at the former, because it is new to them. But neither in text nor in translation do our common Bibles present any such errors or uncertainties as would alter or modify any doctrine of Scripture. Still, that we ought not to employ as Scripture what is known to be spurious, is a proposition which would seem to need no proof.

propose to find instruction in the fact that those men made the statements given. Many such sayings found in the Bible are in themselves utterly untrue, inspiration being responsible only for the fact that they were actually spoken. No one would think of treating as true the vaunting speech of Rabshakeh (2 Kings, chap. 18). The question of the scribes (Mark 2 : 7), "Who can forgive sins but God only?" we know to be a just question, and as such we might make it a text. In John 7 : 46, "Never man spake like this man," we likewise recognize a truth, and at the same time find significance in the fact that the officers sent to apprehend him were thus impressed. The well-known words of Gamaliel (Acts 5 : 38–9) are very instructive as his saying under the circumstances, but the principle laid down is not true without qualification. In the book of Job, many of the things said by those friends are quite erroneous, and a few of Job's own utterances are tinged with error, as is shown in the latter part of the book. These ought not to be treated as unqualified truth, while as *a part* of the discussion they are highly interesting and instructive. So with some particular sayings in Ecclesiastes, which are not the present affirmations of the inspired writer, but only a record of things which he had said in some former wrong mood, and which the argument of the whole book serves to correct. Yet texts from both these books are sometimes preached upon, which, regarded in themselves, present erroneous and morbid views of life. Let all sayings of uninspired men be scrutinized, in the light of their connection and of Scripture in general, before they are used as texts.*

8. In the course of pastoral labor, several considerations should be borne in mind when selecting texts. One is, the present condition of the congregation. A *second*, the

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* See some examples in Vinet, Hom. p. 109.

character of the texts recently discussed. We have to guard against monotony, in the subjects chosen, as well as in the mode of treating them, and to seek after such a relation between the successive sermons as will cause them to help each other's effect. It is sometimes well to look forward and mark out a series of sermons in advance; but it is always well to glance backward, at each new step, and keep in suitable relation to what has preceded. For this purpose, as well as on other accounts, a preacher should from the outset keep a list of sermons preached, including date, place, and text. A *third* and very important consideration is, to select that in which we can at the time take interest, as otherwise we shall not deeply interest others. These three considerations will sometimes more or less conflict; we must endeavor to maintain the balance among them as judiciously as possible.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEXT—INTERPRETATION.

§ 1. Obligation to Interpret Carefully and Strictly. § 2. Chief Sources of Error in the Interpretation of a Text. § 3. Examples of Texts which are often Misapplied. § 4. Brief Rules for Interpreting.

§ 1. To interpret and apply his text in accordance with its real meaning, is one of the preacher's most sacred duties. He stands before the people for the very purpose of teaching and exhorting them out of the Word of God. He announces a particular passage of God's Word as his text with the distinctly implied understanding that from this his sermon will be drawn — if not always its various thoughts, yet certainly its general subject. If he is not willing to be bound by this understanding, he ought to reject the practice which commits him to it, and preach without any text. But using a text, and undertaking to develop and apply its teachings, we are solemnly bound to represent the text as meaning precisely what it does mean.

This would seem to be a truism. But it is often and grievously violated. Not only is there much contented ignorance as to interpretation, and much careless neglect on the part of persons well able to interpret correctly, and much wild spiritualizing of plain words, but, upon the wretched principle of "accommodation," Scripture sentences or phrases are employed as signifying what it is well known, and perhaps even declared at the time, that the sacred writer did not mean to say, and has not at all said. "The original meaning of these words, as used by the inspired writer, is — so and so; but I propose on the present occasion to employ them in the following sense."

That is to say — honored brother, see what you are doing — you stand up to teach men from a passage of God's blessed word, and coolly declare that you propose to make the passage mean what it does not mean. "But the words might have that sense." They might, but as a part of the Bible, as a text of Scripture, they *do not.* If we take the passage in a sense entirely foreign to what the sacred writer designed, as indicated by his connection, then, as we use it, the phrase is no longer a passage of Scripture at all. It is merely *words* of Scripture, used without authority to convey a different meaning; just as truly as if we had picked out words from a concordance, and framed them into a sentence. "But I use the passage merely as a motto." Well, if a preacher has the right to take no text but only a motto — which is questionable — he certainly has not the right to make a Scriptural motto signify what he knows it does not signify. "But the language of Scripture is so rich, its pregnant sayings often mean so much, that I think perhaps this expression may convey, among other things, the sense which I propose." If it really does, there is no objection whatever to using it so. But a mere vague "perhaps" is a slender and tottering excuse for a preacher, who is looked up to by the people as authority in this matter, who is supposed to have studied his text and to *know* its meaning, and whose statements will, for that reason, be accepted by many without question. Such a man is verily guilty before God if he does not honestly strive to understand that which he interprets, and give forth its real meaning and no other.

Now supposing in the preacher an earnest desire to interpret his text correctly, he will not always find it an easy task. Apart from the loose notions, bad examples, and previous wrong practice, which often becloud the mind with reference to interpretation, it has some intrinsic and serious difficulties which can be overcome only by thoughtful effort. While, therefore, the whole great subject of Biblical Hermeneutics or Interpretation does not belong to a treatise on Homiletics, it seems proper and necessary to give some account of the errors to be avoided, and the methods to be adopted, by a preacher in interpreting his text.

§ 2. CHIEF SOURCES OF ERROR IN THE INTERPRETATION OF A TEXT.

1. Erroneous interpretations often arise from *misunderstanding the phraseology of the text itself.* Language can never do more than approximate to perfect precision of expression, with freedom from the possibility of being misunderstood; and an easy, colloquial style is especially apt to involve a number of ellipses, broken constructions, words of various and not well-defined meaning, and other causes of ambiguity. If, then, a revelation was to be given in human language, and to be expressed for the most part in that familiar style which would make it "come home to men's business and bosoms," would make it a book for men and women, and boys and girls, for cultivated and uncultivated people, it must be an inevitable condition of such a revelation that questions might often arise as to the exact meaning of its details. The general drift of a narrative, argument, or exhortation may be obvious enough, and its practical impression upon a docile and susceptible mind may be very distinct, and yet those who come to criticise the details, especially if they come with prepossessions and prejudices, may find numerous expressions capable of being variously interpreted, and perhaps some whose exact sense is really doubtful. Far better this, it is evident, than the idea of a revelation presented in a uniformly didactic and rigorously scientific style, which must at last fail of absolute precision, while it would be thoroughly devoid of interest for the ordinary human

mind. Let us, therefore, cheerfully accept the necessity of exercising great care when we interpret the language of Scripture, as we are compelled to do with all other language.

Moreover, there are in our task some peculiar conditions Many of us have to interpret a translation. Now the best translations are necessarily imperfect. It is rarely, if ever, the case that two words in different languages will contain precisely the same bulk of meaning in the same form, and carry with them the same atmosphere of association and suggestion. Idiomatic differences of construction, too, will sometimes introduce ambiguity where the original was precise, or make too definite what in the original was only general. Especially frequent are the cases in which our language fails to indicate the emphasis, which in the Hebrew or the Greek may be distinctly marked. And then the translation which we employ, though its general style is so admirable, and though no other popular translation has ever equalled it in correctness, is disfigured by not a few errors, and contains various words and phrases which have become obsolete, or have changed their meaning. Yet with all this, there is nothing to discourage or to excuse the preacher from earnest efforts to ascertain the true meaning of his text. By working himself, through extensive, constant and devout reading of the Bible, into thorough sympathy with its characteristic modes of thought and forms of expression, by throwing himself upon the current of the general connection of his text, so as to be borne over any particular difficulties, by comparing it with various other passages in which the same or a kindred subject is treated, and by consulting the works of learned and really judicious expositors, the intelligent preacher who uses only our English Version will have great success in the interpretation of Scripture. Witness the sermons and the writings of hosts of Baptist ministers, and also of

Methodists and others. Witness Andrew Fuller, who had practically no knowledge of the original languages, and yet whose interpretations of Scripture are clear and safe in a degree very rarely surpassed.*

If on the other hand one uses the original languages in his interpretation, there is the danger of being misled by superficial knowledge or hasty examination. To ascertain the *exact* meaning of words and phrases in those languages, a thorough acquaintance with them is obviously necessary. It is often said that one needs a knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek in order that he may understand the difficult passages; it would be more nearly correct, though paradoxical, to say that such knowledge will help him to understand the easy passages, the great mass of Scripture. As to the difficult places, an acquaintance with the original language will enable us to judge, with greater confidence and correctness, among the various interpretations, though it be not likely that we shall strike out anything new, without a profounder knowledge than is often attained. Such an acquaintance will also sometimes save us from the disheartening notion that scholarship would make it all plain, in cases which have at last to be decided by reference to the connection and the general teachings of Scripture. But as to the great bulk of Scripture, even the slightest knowledge of the originals is of service, in helping us to enter into intellectual sympathy with the sacred writers.

For the language of the Bible is pervaded by a Hebraistic spirit, marked by Oriental modes of conception, which are in many respects quite different from those of our own people. This is most clearly seen in the Old Testament, though the New Testament Greek shows more or less of the same tinge. To read but a few pages of Hebrew, even though one should never become capable of exact exegesis, cannot fail to aid a susceptible mind in the sympathetic comprehension of Scripture ways of thinking and peculiarities of expression; and of course a thorough study of the Hebrew and Greek will carry this benefit still farther. The effect is analogous to that of travelling in Palestine. Still, if a man cannot study these languages, he must earnestly strive to catch the tone of Scripture, and even the peculiar tone of its several writers. All persons among us have unconsciously attained something of this, from general reading of the Bible, and from the extent to which Scriptural modes of thought and expression pervade our preaching and our religious literature. But strenuous and sustained effort in this direction is demanded of those who would be good interpreters of Scripture.

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* Dr. Chalmers, in urging his favorite counsel that students and ministers who know the original ought also to make regular and extended study of the English Version, somewhere refers to Andrew Fuller as a striking example of the extent to which a man may carry his knowledge of Scripture by the use of the English Version alone. Some brief and good suggestions on exposition are given by Fuller, Works (ed. Am. Bapt. Pub. Soc.), Vol. I, p. 712.

"In the language of the Bible there is a certain number of words which we may call capital, the meaning of which exactly seized, becomes the key of the Bible. If we confine ourselves purely and simply to the usual signification of the terms which the translator uses in rendering such words into our language, we are in great danger of committing serious errors. Thus, as to the words *flesh, soul, heart, fear, faith, understanding, foolish, light, darkness, just, righteousness, salvation, grace, good man, wicked.* The translator has translated for you the words; you must translate the ideas for yourselves." * The technical sense in Scripture of such leading terms, we partly learn from general observation in reading, but may more precisely ascertain through a comparison, by help of the Concordance, of many passages in which they are employed.

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* Vinet, Hom. p. 111.

Further, it is to be observed that the language of Scripture is, as a general thing, not philosophical but popular, not scientific but poetic, not so much an analytical language, fond of sharp discriminations and exact statements, as a synthetical language, abounding in concrete terms, the representatives not of abstractions, but of facts of actual existence and experience, and which in their meaning gradually shade into each other, without any definite line of distinction. This character leads to some peculiar forms of expression, which abound in the Bible, and are important for the interpretation of many texts.

"A poetic language, a language I mean of a poetic people, delights alternately to diminish and augment, that the imagination of the hearer or reader may be exercised in adding or retrenching." E. g. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin" (1 John 3 : 9). "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16 : 15). "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, ... he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14 : 26). And, as an example of a *diminished* expression, "The unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5 : 11).

"It delights by turns to make absolute that which is relative, and relative that which is absolute." Examples of the former: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; . . . . but call the poor, the maimed," &c. (Luke 14 : 12). This is stated as an *absolute* prohibition of inviting friends, kindred, rich neighbors, and a command to invite exclusively the other class. We know very well that our Lord did not mean to be thus understood, nor does any one ever thus interpret. Naturally and as a matter of course, men will invite kindred, the rich

&c., and for this, which is done because of mere natural affection or social reciprocity, they will get no religious reward. But it is so *much more* important, on religious grounds and in hope of a Divine reward, to invite the poor and suffering, that our Lord speaks as if, compared with this, the former must not be done at all. In Prov. 8 : 10, we have first the absolute form of statement, and then in the parallel clause the relative form: "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold." Here the former clause was not meant to be understood as really making an absolute prohibition of receiving silver; it is simply a highly emphatic way of urging the same thought that is presented in the latter clause. In Gen. 45 : 8, Joseph says, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." In Jer. 7 : 22–3, God declares, "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." It was well known that God *had* spoken to their fathers very extensively concerning sacrifices; but the command to obedience is held to be so much more important, that the other is pronounced *nothing* in the comparison. So with Matt. 9 : 13 (Hos. 6 : 6), "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." All this seems obvious. But does not the same principle apply to 1 Pet. 3 : 3, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, ... the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," &c.? (Comp. 1 Tim. 2 : 9.) The apostle does not mean to be understood as really prohibiting all outward adornment, any more than the other passages prohibit inviting kindred, receiving silver, or offering sacrifices; he means to say emphatically that the most beautiful outward adorning, such as women so highly prize, is as nothing in comparison with that imperishable adorning of the spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. It is an absolute statement, designed to be understood relatively, but calculated by its absolute form to be very emphatic and impressive. If this view of the passage be correct, then thousands of well-meaning Christians, and more than one organized body, have vainly striven to eradicate the natural love of ornament, merely because they did not consider that the energetic language of Scripture frequently puts absolute for relative; and at the same time thousands of others, through the same mistake, have failed to appreciate the urgent and vehement exhortation to care less for outward, and more for inward adornment. On the other hand, the following is an example of relative for absolute: "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke 18 : 14). We understand, as it was intended we should, that the publican was justified, while the Pharisee, contrary to all popular expectation, really was not justified.

"It generalizes that which is particular, and particularizes that which is general; takes duty sometimes at its summit, sometimes at its base. E. g. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor' (Exod. 20: 16). It sometimes does not distinguish nicely the notions which are closely related to each other, such as *wicked* and *foolish*. It delights in synonyms and parallelisms, in advancing in couples or pairs of ideas. E. g. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path' (Psa. 119: 105). It classifies without scientific purpose; as, 'Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me' (Psa. 51: 12). The Old and the New Testament abound in similar examples. We frequently find in the prophets and apostles series of substantives or adjectives, which have been taken very improperly as the base of divisions in discourses." Thus in 1 Pet. 4 : 18, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" it is quite common to take the ungodly and the sinner as representing two distinct classes, which is not justified by the mere use of both terms, and is in fact forbidden by the construction of the Greek. So as to the several terms in 2 Pet. 1 : 5–7, distinctions are sometimes very unwisely pressed.

"Such is the language of the Bible; and further, each of the epochs which are represented in it, each of the authors who contributed to it, has a peculiar style." *

2. Erroneous interpretations arise from *disregarding the connection of the text.* In some cases, a sentence taken apart from its connection would give a positively wrong sense. E.g. "Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile" (2 Cor. 12 : 16). In others, it would be hopelessly ambiguous, or utterly vague. In nearly all cases, a *thorough* understanding will require that we examine the connection. Even in those portions of Proverbs, where the several sentences appear wholly disconnected, one may sometimes derive help from observing what seems to be the general class of topics which the writer or collector has here in mind. In the Psalms, even Psalm 119, there is always a general drift by which we may be guided. In the narratives, poetical treatises, discourses, epistolary arguments, etc., which make up almost the entire Bible, the connection is obviously important. It might in fact seem needless to insist on this. No man of sense, in dealing with any other book, would think of interpreting a single sentence here or there, in entire disregard of its connection. If an agriculturist or engineer, a physician or lawyer, should thus interpret detached sentences in the works which he consults for

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* These extracts, with some of the passages of Scripture quoted in illustration, are from Vinet, Hom. p. 113–4. The sentences extracted are sometimes slightly altered.

instruction and practical guidance, he would be voted a simpleton.

Why in the world, then, do men of sense so often neglect, or even knowingly violate, the connection of a Scripture text? Partly from the long-continued and wide-spread practice of allegorizing — to be discussed below — which is often most easily managed by cutting loose from the context, and which has encouraged men to think that the language of Scripture is so very different from all other language, as to be independent of the principles which ordinarily govern interpretation. It is a mournful fact that Universalists, Romanists, Mormons, can find an apparent support for their heresies in Scripture, without interpreting more loosely, without doing greater violence to the meaning and connection of the sacred text than is sometimes done by orthodox, devout and even intelligent men. A second cause is the exclusive use of short texts. Men of ordinary powers cannot always find short passages which, interpreted in the light of the connection, will furnish them material enough for a sermon; and they are tempted to make some additional application of the words which the connection does not admit, or even to break a sentence away from its connection, and give it an entirely new application, which would make it a striking text.* Under such pressure, and encouraged by the example of good and honored brethren, they interpret as suits them; and the habit thus formed is perhaps confirmed by indolence, seeing that it is often troublesome to study the context.

And there is yet another cause. Some six centuries ago there began the present division of the Bible into chapters, and some three centuries ago the subdivision into verses. Both were made for convenience in reference, just as somewhat similar divisions and subdivisions have from time to time been made in the text of many Greek and Latin authors. In the classics, however, only the larger divisions, the chapters, have been printed as separate, the subdivisions being put together according to the sense, and merely noted on the margin or within the text. Unfortunately, a different course has been pursued in printing the Bible; beginning with the Genevan Version, it has become common to print each verse as a separate paragraph. This mode of printing was probably introduced partly because of the peculiar structure of the Psalms, in which the successive sentences are frequently distinct; it was also calculated to save trouble in finding verses, and the practice at one time existed of printing "references" not as we do in the margin, but at the end of each verse. Whatever causes established the custom, it has long been a custom, and some persons even defend it because it makes the Bible look different from other books. Now the division into verses, as well as that into chapters, was very carelessly made, and often sadly disregards the connection and obscures the sense. And even if the verses were better divided, the separate printing of brief sentences and parts of sentences must of necessity make it more difficult to keep up the general connection, particularly as we are accustomed, in all other books, to a division into paragraphs, which mark the connection clearly. The result has been to lead both preachers and hearers to think of every chapter and every verse as a sort of separate whole. It is curious to observe how rarely we hear read in public the latter part of one chapter and the earlier part of the next, though the slightest care for the real connection of narrative or argument would often require this; and how awkward it would seem to take the last words of one verse and the first words of another as a text. To dispel this illusion, which makes every verse a paragraph, and every chapter almost a distinct book, is a matter of serious importance for all persons, ministers or others, who wish really to understand the Bible. Much advantage may be derived from habitually reading a Paragraph Bible.* No other mode of printing is now tolerated in the Greek, and in Hebrew the paragraphs marked by the early Jewish scholars have always been retained.

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* See on Expository Preaching, Part II, chap. 3.

It would seem plain from what has been said, that the preacher who wishes to deal fairly with his own mind and with God's Word, must determine that he will never interpret a text without careful regard to its connection.† The considerations presented may explain how it is that many devout and sometimes able brethren have been led to do otherwise, and censure of their course is not proposed; but when a man's attention has been distinctly called to the matter, he is solemnly bound to give heed to it in practice. How shall one reconcile it with the responsibility of his position, to stand before men in God's name, and say that a passage of the blessed Bible means anything else than what he is satisfied, from the phraseology and the connection, that it really does mean?

In one direction, however, the idea of strict interpretation may be carried too far. It is certainly best, as a general rule, to confine our sermon to the precise subject, and aspect of a subject, which the text in its connection sets forth.‡ But we are not necessarily restricted to this. Some principle may be presented by the text in one application, and we may with perfect propriety make other applications of it. That is not violating the connection, for the text really teaches the principle, and the new applications are avowedly made by ourselves, guided by the general teachings of Scripture. The apostle Paul quite frequently states a broad principle as bearing on some particular question of truth or duty. E. g. Gal. 6:7, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is said with special reference to the duty of contributing to the support of religious teachers, but it is given as a general truth, and admits of many applications. In Rom. 14:12, the special thought is that "every one of us will give account *of himself*," and so we must not judge one another; but there is of course involved in this the general fact that every one will give account, and thus the passage really presents the subject of accountability. Many similar examples might be found throughout the Bible. In other cases, we may start from the precise point given by the text and advance to related truths. We thus extend the application of the text, but in a direction not foreign but akin to the sacred writer's specific design. Thus in Amos 4:12, "Prepare to meet thy God," the prophet gives warning of impending temporal judgments upon the nation, and calls upon them to prepare to meet God in these. Now it is lawful for us, after pointing out this, to show that if we continue in sin we must all meet God, not only in temporal judgments but in the vengeance of the great day, and thus call on our hearers to prepare for eternity. This is not disregarding the connection, not misinterpreting the text, it is simply carrying the idea farther in the same direction; carrying it farther on our own responsibility, with no assertion or implication that the sacred writer referred to all the topics which our discourse includes. It thus appears that one may preach from a text on any matter which it presents to the mind, whether directly or indirectly, by statement, presupposition or inference, provided that in some way it *really does mean* what is claimed; and where this is something only indirectly presented, it will be best to point out, in some simple way, that such is the case, so as not to encourage the people in loose notions on the subject of interpretation. How different is such a course from that of a preacher who gave a Missionary sermon from the words of the young ruler, "What lack I yet?" inquiring what we lack for greater success in the missionary enterprise. This is an extreme case; but thousands of sermons are preached in which the connection and real meaning of the text is just as completely, though not often so manifestly, disregarded and violated.

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* Bagster has published Paragraph Bibles, in various styles. The Annotated Paragraph Bible of the London Religious Tract Society is well arranged, and has also very valuable notes. The American Baptist Publication Society has a Bible, and a New Testament, printed in paragraphs, and sufficiently cheap. The Revised New Testament and other publications of the American Bible Union have the advantage of being printed in the same way.

† See below, § 4, Rule 2.

‡ Comp. on Subject-sermons, Part II, chap. 3.

The remark may be here added, that where a text in its connection admits of more than one meaning, we shall do well either to avoid it as too ambiguous for our purpose, or to indicate that we take the more probable sense, and confine attention to its lessons as thus understood. The plan of taking up in succession several different senses and making a practical application of each, cannot be approved. We must bring to bear upon men's minds as a part of God's Word, only what the text really means, as best we can ascertain it.

3. A third source of error in the interpretation of texts is *improper spiritualizing.*

We have no other means of representing spiritual things than by metaphors derived from things temporal; and our very conceptions of the unseen world depend upon images furnished by the world in which we now live. Swedenborg taught, in the "doctrine of correspondences" upon which he asserts the Scriptures to have been written, that every object and relation in the material sphere has something corresponding to it in the spiritual sphere. As a universal fact, we may well ask for some better proof of this than the Swedish Baron's visions; but it is going to the opposite extreme if we imagine that the relation between things temporal and spiritual is simply an affair of metaphors. The Scriptures appear to teach that there really is much of intimate connection and much of close correspondence between these two great spheres of existence. All the false religions present perversions and distortions of this conception. And the allegorical, in the broad sense of that term, is very widely and variously employed in the Scriptures of truth. The numerous sacrifices and purifications enjoined in the law, represented the work of Christ and of his Spirit. The prophets frequently employed objects or events near at hand to picture realities belonging to the Messianic age. The history of Israel had a typical relation, on the one hand to the life of Christ, on the other to the fortunes of his Church; and Zion, the capital city and representative of Israel, furnished a favorite prophetic image in depicting the future of the spiritual Israel. Individual personages of history, as Melchizedek, Moses, Joshua, David, Cyrus, undoubtedly bore a divinely-designed resemblance, in some respects, to the coming Messiah. The relation between husband and wife afforded an oft-recurring image of the relation between God and the chosen nation, between Christ and his Church. Even the enmity of Sarah and Hagar pictured the opposition between bondage under the law and liberty in the gospel.

With such a foundation in the nature of things, and with so much support in the actual usage of the Bible, it is not strange that there has always been on the part of some men a tendency to spiritualize, widely and wildly, the language of Scripture. It is common to speak of Origen (3rd cent.) as the father of Christian allegorizing; but it abounds already in some writers of the 2nd cent., and Origen learned much of it, as regards the Old Testament, from Philo the Jew, a contemporary of our Lord, the Alexandrian Jews having long been engaged in this sort of speculation. Origen's transcendent ability, learning, and power of creative imagination contributed much to make fanciful allegorizing popular among Christians. Most of the great Fathers, who have ever since exerted so powerful an influence, are grievously infected with this evil. At the present day, not a few of the most learned and devout preachers in the Church of England and among the German Lutherans run wild with their imitations of Patristic allegorizing; while many very ignorant men, of various denominations, following only the methods caught from older preachers in their locality, bring out the "spiritual sense" of the plainest narratives and precepts in a fashion wholly unwarranted and often painfully absurd. In the denominations not controlled by "the Fathers," better views of interpretation have for some time prevailed. Among Baptists, for instance, the influence of Fuller and Hall, and the wider diffusion of ministerial education, have wrought a gratifying change. But there is still much ignorance to overcome, and too many able and honored ministers continue sometimes to sanction the old-fashioned spiritualizing by their potent example. It is so easy and pleasant, for men of fertile fancy, to break away from laborious study of phraseology and connection, to cease plodding along the rough and homely paths of earth, and sport, free and rejoicing, in the open heaven; the people are so charmed by ingenious novelties, so carried away with imaginative flights, so delighted to find everywhere types of Christ and likenesses to the spiritual life; it is so common to think that whatever kindles the imagination and touches the heart must be good preaching, and so easy to insist that the doctrines of the sermon are in themselves true and Scriptural, though they be not actually taught in the text, — that preachers often lose sight of their fundamental and inexcusable error, of *saying that a passage of*

God's Word means what it does not mean. So independent, too, one may feel; so original he may think himself. Commentaries, he can sneer at them all; other preachers, he has little need of comparing views with them. No need of anything but the resources of his own imagination, for such preaching is too often only building castles in the air.

The tendency to error in this direction is also increased by the fact, that it is impossible, in respect to spiritualizing, to draw a line of unquestionable distinction between what is and what is not allowable. Whatever in the Old Testament is used by New Testament writers as having a spiritual sense, is of course beyond question. Many insist that we must stop at this; that nothing whatever is to be understood allegorically, save by distinct New Testament authority. Theoretically, this appears to be too strict a rule; for in the case of other objects or events precisely similar to those which are used spiritually in the New Testament, it would be unwise to deny that these also may have such a sense. But practically as to *texts,* we can never feel safe in going beyond this rule; anything not thus used in the New Testament can only be spoken of as possibly, or at most as probably, having an allegorical meaning; and while possible or probable interpretations, when distinctly stated to be such, may be properly used as part of the argument or illustration of a sermon, the text, which is the foundation or source of the whole sermon, ought in the preacher's judgment really to have, beyond peradventure, the meaning assigned to it. It should be added, that portions of Scripture which cannot be *interpreted* as having a spiritual meaning, may yet be employed in various ways for teaching spiritual truth. They may embody principles, capable of an application to spiritual things, though such an application must be made by the preacher on his own responsibility, and received by the people on their own judgment, not as a part of the teachings of Scripture. Or they may furnish illustrations of spiritual truth, just as we may derive illustration from everything in nature, history and common life.[*]

And observe: In the case of *figurative passages*, which really have a spiritual meaning, there is danger of pressing the figure too far, of fancying a spiritual sense in aspects or details of the figure which are not really within the scope of the inspired writer. When our Lord says, "Take my yoke upon you," we have no right to hunt up all manner of details as to yokes and oxen, and run a fanciful parallel as to each particular; the general meaning is plain enough, and that is all. When he says, "Be ye wise as serpents," or, "I will make you fishers of men," and in ten thousand passages of Scripture, the same principle holds. We must inquire what the sacred speaker or writer designed by the figure; so much it means, but beyond that, as a part of Scripture, it means nothing.[†] Especially common are errors of this kind in the interpretation of our Lord's *Parables.* The stories which were told by the Great Teacher are illustrations of unrivalled beauty and impressiveness, but still they are illustrations. Like the illustrative comparisons and incidents which we employ, some of them are founded upon a closer, and others upon a more remote, resemblance or analogy; some run parallel for a long distance to the subject compared with them, others barely touch it at a single point. When Christ's coming is said to be as a thief in the night, the resemblance extends only to unexpectedness; as to the character and objects of the parties, and almost everything else that is involved, the illustration and the thing illustrated are utterly unlike. And when it is said, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13 : 33), what sense is there in looking for some spiritual truth illustrated by the number *three*, or in saying that the *woman* represents the Church, when as a matter of course a woman and not a man would be introduced in a story as making up bread? In undertaking to interpret a parable, we must learn from the connection what subject our Lord used it to illustrate — must then notice what light the parable as a whole throws on that subject, what aspects of the subject it brings to our view — and finally inquire how far we may fairly regard the several details of the story as separately significant. In this last respect we must avoid extremes, exercise sound judgment, and constantly keep in mind that the parable is an illustration, and founded on some resemblance or analogy which is at best only partial. After thus studying one of the parables of Christ, we are prepared to preach upon it, with some prospect of bringing out its real meaning and legitimate applications.

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[*] Comp. Vinet, p. 120.

[†] There is good instruction on this subject in Fairbairn's Hermeneutical Manual, p. 157–173.

§ 4. EXAMPLES OF TEXTS OFTEN MISAPPLIED.

There has been during the present century considerable improvement in various quarters as regards strict interpretation in the pulpit. But to show how much laxity on the subject still prevails, it is proposed to mention a few examples of passages which we have all heard preached upon, or used by preachers in argument, and whose meaning is beyond question very different from that commonly attached to them. It is strange how powerful is the tradition of the pulpit; how often able and thoughtful men will go all their lives taking for granted that an important passage has that meaning which in youth they heard ascribed to it, when the slightest examination would show them that it is far otherwise. The examples here given are arranged in the order of the three sources of error as to interpretation which have been discussed in the foregoing section, though of course these will sometimes be combined in the same passage.

1. Misunderstanding the phraseology of the text itself. Jer. 3 : 4, "My father, thou art the guide of my youth." This is very often

used in preaching to the young, and given as a motto on the title-page of books for the young, the idea being that young people should seek the guidance of our Heavenly Father. But this is to miss the Scripture use of the phrase, "guide of my youth," as well as to disregard the connection of the passage. In Prov. 2 : 17 it is plain that 'guide of her youth' (more exactly, companion, associate of her youth) denotes the husband. Here in Jeremiah it is the same Hebrew word. The whole connection of chap. 2 and 3 shows that God through the prophet is reproaching the nation as an adulterous spouse, who deserves to be utterly cast off; but still he invites her to return to him. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Thou art my early husband, the companion of my youth (comp. Jer. 2 : 2; Hos. 2 : 15), and I return unto thee. And the term 'father' is just a respectful form of address used by the wife to her husband, as Naaman's servants called him 'my father' (2 Kings 5 : 13). Thus the common application of the passage is utterly erroneous.

Eccl. 12 : 1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Here the word 'now' is often much insisted on. But the Hebrew is simply 'and remember,' etc. Our translators, not perceiving the propriety of the connection indicated by 'and,' and finding it entirely omitted by their favorite authorities, the Vulgate and Luther, used, as a sort of compromise, the particle of transition 'now.' The connection is really very fine. 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth . . . . and walk in the ways of thine heart . . . . . . and know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. And remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are a breath. And remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' etc.

Prov. 8 : 17, "They that seek me early shall find me." This does not at all mean early in life, as it is so constantly taken. Our translators, following the Vulgate, understood the Hebrew to signify early in the morning, there being a cognate word which denotes morning; and the idea they intended to convey was similar to that of Jer. 7 : 13, "And I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not." Their phrase thus gives substantially the same sense with the view of recent scholars, who suppose that there is no connection with the idea of morning, and explain the word as signifying to seek (so the Septuagint), or to seak zealously, earnestly (Comp. Prov. 1 : 28; Psa. 63 : 1; Hos. 5 : 15). Thus the passage has no specific, much less exclusive reference to the young

Psa. 23 : 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." To many it would seem almost sacrilege to say that this passage has no direct reference to the time when one is drawing near to death. The shadow of death, the dark place where the dead are, is an image frequently employed in the Old Testament to denote the densest darkness. Thus in Amos 5 : 8, God is described as "He that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night." Here it means the darkness of night. In Psa. 107 : 10, "Such as sat in darkness and the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron," the reference is to the darkness of a dungeon. In Jer. 2 : 7, "Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness . . . . . through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through," the darkness of a gloomy desert is meant. In Isa. 9 : 2, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined," it is the darkness of destitution, ignorance and affliction. (Comp. Matt. 4 : 16.) The phrase is used in various other passages, but always meaning dense darkness, literal or figurative, and nowhere having any reference to dying. Now in Psa. 23 : 4, the image is that of a flock led through a deep, narrow, very dark valley, such as abound in Judea, with wild beasts lurking in the thickets on either hand, where the timid sheep would fear hurt, unless protected by the shepherd; the Psalmist says that though walking in the darkest valley, dark as the grave, he will fear no evil, &c. And the image will naturally suggest any season or experience of life in which the believer would naturally feel alarm and distress, but may be safe in his Shepherd's presence and protection.* Such are temptation, sickness, bereavement, and death too, not because the word death is employed, but because the image of passing through a valley dark as the grave naturally applies to death, and not as the single application, but as one of many. Thus a correct understanding of the passage does not destroy, but widens, its significance.

Rom. 12 : 1, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Here many will begin to speak of making sacrifices, in our derivative sense of that term. But the thought of the text is, that as men presented at the altar the bodies of beasts as sacrifices so we must consecrate *ourselves* unto God; and this is a "reasonable service," a worship of the rational or spiritual nature, and not a mere bodily worship, made up of outward acts and offerings.

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* Bunyan in the Pilgrim's Progress uses the image correctly, making his pilgrim pass through the valley of the shadow of death some time before he reaches the river.

1 Tim. 2 : 8, "I will that men pray everywhere," etc. The Greek gives 'the men,' and has the peculiar word which signifies man as opposed to woman. The apostle is giving directions for the conduct of public worship, and says that the men must pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. These phrases embody the special dangers with reference to men, when engaging in public worship; and in the next verse he says that women, for their part, must not dress too fine, but be adorned with good works.

2 Tim. 2 : 15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God," etc. This is often quoted, and sometimes made a text, as teaching that a minister must study, viz. study books, especially the Bible—study nature, human nature, etc. The real meaning of our version, as of the original, is endeavor, studiously endeavor to present thyself approved unto God.

Heb. 7 : 25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him," is a favorite text as showing that Christ is able to save the worst sinners. The real meaning of the phrase —as the connection also might show—is, save to the utmost, to the full extent of saving. As our High Priest does not transmit his office to successors, and leave to others the work he has begun, but ever lives to intercede for those who come to God through him, he is able to save them completely—not merely to begin their salvation, but to carry it forward in life and death till in eternity it is complete.

2. Disregarding the connection.

Col. 2 : 21, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." These words have been a thousand times blazoned on banners, and quoted by impassioned orators, as a precept of Holy Writ against the use of intoxicating drinks. The slightest attention to the connection would show, that in the first place, they are not spoken with any reference to that subject, and in the second place, that they are given by the apostle as an example of ascetic precepts to which we *ought not to conform.* "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, Handle not, taste not, touch not, ... after the commandments and teachings of men?" There are many passages of Scripture which enjoin Temperance, but this is certainly not one of them.

Heb. 6 : 1, "Let us go on unto perfection," is a favorite text with some of those who maintain the possibility of sinless perfection in this life. But the sacred writer is speaking of *knowledge*, and urges progress toward maturity of knowledge. The word in the preceding verse (5 : 14) rendered 'of full age' is literally 'perfect;' so that the two verses have a close verbal connection, besides the general connection in sense.

1 Cor. 2 : 9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," is constantly quoted as referring to the glory and blessedness of heaven; but the connection leaves no doubt that the apostle refers to the profound wisdom of the plan of salvation, which no human mind could have perceived or imagined, but which "God has revealed unto us by his Spirit."

Mark 9 : 8, "Jesus only." To make these words a text, and discourse upon Jesus only as Prophet, Jesus only as Priest, Jesus only as King, etc., is an extreme instance of disregarding the context. At the close of the transfiguration, "suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves." Now it is very true that we must have Jesus only as Prophet, Priest and King, but who will say that this passage teaches that, or even fairly suggests it? And the mere words, taken entirely apart from what the sacred writer meant by them, are no more a saying of Scripture, than if 'Jesus' had been taken from Mark, and 'only' from Romans; and the two combined as a text.

Isa. 1 : 5, 6, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," etc. This is sometimes used as a text, and perpetually cited as a proof-text, to show the total depravity of man. But look at the connection. The nation of Israel had been stricken with the Divine *judgments*, till it was like a man beaten with the terrible Oriental scourging, from head to foot, and with wounds and stripes unhealed; the country was desolate, the cities burned, and Jerusalem stood alone in a wilderness. And the prophet asks, Why should ye be stricken any more? If it is done, you will revolt still more. Already you are beaten from head to foot, but punishment makes you no better, it even seems to make you worse. Now this would be an excellent text for showing how often nations, communities, individuals, refuse to be subdued by afflictions, and go on in their wickedness; and there is in this respect a proof here of the depravity of man. But the image, the whole head is sick, etc., is clearly not at all designed to set forth depravity, but severe chastisement.

Isa. 63 : 1–3, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with bright-red garments from Bozrah? . . . . . . I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel? . . . . . I have trodden the wine-press alone." How often this is held to denote our Saviour as shedding his blood, and suffering alone, for our salvation. And yet what can be plainer than that this is a conqueror, stained with *his enemies'* blood, and fighting alone? In the same sentence he says, "For I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments." (Comp. also ver. 4–6.) Here the speaker is the conqueror of Edom, and deliverer of Israel. If understood as applying to Messiah, it must be to him as conquering his people's enemies, and mighty to save in this sense. In Rev. 19 : 11–16, the same imagery is employed in describing the Word of God; yet there too it is not a sufferer but a conqueror.

1 Kings 18 : 21, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" The favorite use of this text is to reproach men with indecision and hesitation as to becoming Christians. But the Israelites were not undecided as to whether they would serve Jehovah or Baal, they were trying to serve both, to conform to the fashionable court-religion, and yet retain the religion of their fathers. Elijah reproaches them with this effort to do both. Serve Jehovah, or else Baal, not first one and then the other. (Comp. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon".)

3. Improper spiritualizing, etc.

Amos 6 : 1, "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion." Here Zion is the Church, those at ease in Zion are the slothful, worthless members of the Church, and away we go. But the prophet adds, "and trust in the mountain of Samaria;" what is the "spiritual sense" of that? The chiefs of Judah trusted in the strong fortifications of Jerusalem, and those of the northern kingdom in Samaria, and so they were not alarmed by the prophetic warnings that enemies would come and destroy those capitals, as other great cities had been destroyed. Wo to them, if quietly confiding in Jerusalem and Samaria, they did not repent of their wickedness, and trust in God. The application of this in time of war is manifest and important. The principle might also be applied to any reliance upon human instrumentalities, or outward agencies, instead of relying on God.

The do-nothing members of a church deserve severe scourging, but this text does not touch them.

Exod. 2 : 9, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And some able men actually make this a text in preaching to parents, or to Sunday School teachers. "God says to you, Take this child," etc. But he says no such thing. He simply tells us that the daughter of Pharaoh said this to the mother of Moses. God does not address these words to anybody. To find here a spiritual meaning, is so wholly unwarranted, so utterly arbitrary, as to be beyond the reach of argument. If the preacher says that *he takes* the words in the sense proposed, then they are not Scripture at all,—not God's saying, but his saying,—and ought not to be called a text, for that means Scripture. It would be just as appropriate to take Prov. 23 : 30, "Tarry long at the wine," as a Divine precept, or Psa. 14 : 1, "There is no God," as a declaration of Scripture. Whether as allegorizing or as "accommodation," such an application of the text is indefensible, and when once a man's attention has been called to the matter, it would be inexcusable.

Jonah 1 : 6, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" How *can* a preacher tell us that these words refer to sinners as spiritually asleep? Jonah, worn out with his hasty and anxious journey to Joppa, and now safe aboard, was soundly sleeping; and the ship-captain, alarmed and impatient, shouts at him, "What are you about, fast asleep? arise, call upon thy God," as all the rest are doing. A minister can utter these words to sleeping sinners, but he may not say that God addresses this question to them, or to any one. God's Word simply narrates the fact that the ship-captain thus spoke; he does not himself speak the words at all. As merely the minister's words, they would not be a part of Scripture. As to any properly allegorical meaning hidden in the words, it is a sheer figment, and must be proven, not recklessly assumed.

Prov. 18 : 24, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It is commonly held that in the 8th chapter of Proverbs there is some allusion to Christ — which is not at all certain — and hence any passage in Proverbs at will is taken as referring to Christ. But at chap. 10 there begins a manifestly distinct collection, containing a number of detached proverbs, exceedingly instructive and useful for our practical guidance in life, but having not the slightest appearance of a mystical character. The proverbs which here immediately precede and follow, and the other half of this proverb, are about common matters. Ver. 21, power of the tongue; ver. 22, blessing of finding a wife; ver. 23, the poor entreats, the rich answers roughly; and as to the succeeding proverbs, ver. 1 (next chapter), the poor who walks in his integrity, and the perverse fool, etc., etc. Ver. 24 is rendered, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The first half is in the Hebrew obscure, but most probably means 'a man of [many] associates will ruin himself,' by misplaced confidence, or 'will prove bad,' cannot be faithful to them all. However that may be, the general subject is plainly the common friendships of life; and there is no hint of allusion to Christ. And then it is added that there are some close and permanent friendships, there is a friend (literally, 'lover') that sticketh closer than a brother; not referring to any particular individual, but meaning that such a thing does exist We need not condemn the poet's use of this expression,

"One there is above all others
  Well deserves the name of friend:
His is love beyond a brother's," etc.;

but the license of poetical adaptation is a very different thing from interpretation. One might take this proverb as a text, and speak of the friendships that are close and faithful, and then pass by analogy, on his own responsibility, to speak of Christ as a friend; but that is not saying that this passage refers to Christ.

It has seemed necessary to discuss the above passages with some care, because the inexperienced reader might naturally be slow to believe that so many favorite texts have been utterly misunderstood, by himself and by many preachers around him. The particular interpretations here given may be rejected, if thorough examination shows them to be incorrect. What is particularly urged is to form the habit of carefully studying every text, even the most familiar and apparently obvious, to see if it really does mean what the preacher has hitherto supposed. This practice will rob him of many texts, but will enrich him with many others. Most of those above considered, when the common application has been set aside, are found to have a sense that may be made interesting and useful. And by careful examination many another passage will develop unsuspected riches. If strict interpretation of texts brought unmitigated loss of material, we ought still to practise it, for the sake of dealing honestly with our own minds, and with

God's Word; but the habit of strict interpretation will give far more than it takes away. If one knows the Hebrew or the Greek, let him never preach upon a text without carefully studying it and its context in the original. Otherwise, let him search the best translations, and good *explanatory* Notes, determined that he will never say a passage of God's holy and precious Word means so and so, without personal, honest, patient effort to ascertain the fact.

§ 4. BRIEF RULES FOR INTERPRETING A TEXT.

Though we have discussed at length the chief sources of error in the interpretation of texts, and illustrated them by many examples, it seems best to give, positively, some account of the principles upon which one must proceed if he would interpret correctly. Good treatises on Interpretation are accessible,* and it is sufficient here to give several brief rules.

1. Interpret grammatically. Endeavor to ascertain the precise meaning of the words and phrases used in the text. Inquire whether any of them have a peculiar sense in Scripture, and whether such peculiar sense holds in this passage. If there are key-words in the text, or words of special importance, examine, by the help of a Concordance, other passages in which such word is employed. This is best done in the original, because our version will often have the same word where the Hebrew or Greek is different, and the same Greek or Hebrew word will be used in important passages where our version renders differently. There are admirable Concordances of the Hebrew and the Greek, and where these are not in possession, the Lexicons of those languages will give many references, frequently all. In cases of special importance, able men not acquainted with

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* Such as Fairbairn's Hermeneutical Manual (for the New Testament), Davidson's Biblical Hermeneutics (particularly full on the History of Interpretation), Angus' Bible Hand-Book, Barrows' Companion to the Bible (new, cheap, and on this subject quite good), Horne's Introduction.

the originals have found it useful to employ the Englishman's Greek Concordance of the N. T., and the Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the O. T. In the New Test., the Index to Winer's Grammar will show whether he has explained any grammatical constructions in the text. The best translations into our own or other languages will often throw light on the text, or raise questions as to its meaning which we may find it useful to pursue. Familiar passages often assume great freshness, and suggest new trains of thought, when looked at in a new English Version,* or a translation into Latin, French, German, etc. Even those who can use the original languages find this true, because one is so apt when looking at the Hebrew or Greek to be really looking through it at the familiar English version, as if written underneath. And then by all means examine the best accessible Commentaries, not such as remark upon the text, and enlarge upon its teachings, but such as carefully explain the exact meaning.

This grammatical study of the text can scarcely be made too minute or protracted. Whately used to say, "Before writing your sermon, look at your text with a microscope,"† and Shedd justly remarks: "Every particle of care in first obtaining an excellent text and then getting at, and getting out, its real meaning and scope, goes to render the actual construction and composition of the sermon, more easy and successful. Labor at this point saves labor at all after points." ‡

2. Interpret logically. The connection of thought in

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* The Revised New Test. of the Amer. Bible Union, though it has a few serious blemishes, is in the main very correct, fairly representing the best scholarship of the day, and though it be not recommended as a popular version, is certainly a valuable help for the interpretation of texts.

† Life and Remains of Whately, p. 402.

‡ Shedd Hom. p. 176.

which a text stands will of course throw light upon its meaning, and is usually indispensable to understanding it. This logical connection will sometimes really be the entire book to which the text belongs. There are very few sentences in Hebrews, or in the first eleven chapters of Romans, which can be fully understood without having in mind the entire argument of the Epistle. Of course this is not so strikingly true in most of the books, but each of them has its own distinctive contents, connection and character. Few things are to be so earnestly urged upon the student of Scripture, as that he shall habitually study its books with reference to their whole connection.* Then he can minutely examine any particular text with a correct knowledge of its general position and surroundings. But in a narrower sense there is a context, which will embrace from a few verses to a few chapters, before and after the text, and of which the preacher should not only have a general knowledge, but should make special examination, when examining his text; and we must resist the common tendency to imagine that this context begins or ends with the *chapter* in which the text stands. The extent to which such study of the context should be carried, will of course be very different in different cases; but there are scarcely any texts with reference to which it can with propriety be entirely neglected. Wherever it is practicable, the context, as well as the text, should by all means be read in the original languages, or with such other helps as are recommended under the foregoing rule. In a great number of cases there is an interesting verbal connection between the text and some sentence a little before or after it, which is obscured by the necessary conditions of translation, or by the extreme fondness of our English Version for varying the translation where the original has the same word. It should be remarked that besides the importance of studying the logical connection in order to a thorough understanding of the text, an exposition of the context often forms a good, and sometimes a necessary, Introduction to the sermon.

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* Compare on Expository Preaching, Part II, chap. 3.

3. Interpret historically. Apart from the logical connection of discourse in which a text is found, there is often important aid to be derived from general historical knowledge. In the narratives, which make up the larger part of Scripture, we have constant need of observing facts of Geography, which would throw light on the text. So as to the Manners and Customs of the Jews, and other nations who appear in the sacred story. Thus much is obvious, though these helps for understanding texts are seldom used as diligently as they should be. But there is also much to be learned by taking account of the opinions and state of mind of the persons addressed in a text. We need to remember the relations between the speaker or writer and those whom he has specially in view. In order to this, we must not merely know the previous relations of the parties, as in the case of Paul's Epistles, but must endeavor to ascertain what errors or evils existed among them which the inspired teacher is here aiming to correct. This can often be gathered from the book itself. No trouble need ever have been felt as to the supposed contradiction between Paul and James with regard to justification, if attention had been paid to the theoretical and practical errors at which they are respectively aiming. In the case of our Lord's teachings, much may be learned from the Gospels, and also from the Jewish writings, and the modern works founded on them, concerning the wrong notions and evil practices existing among the Jews, and to which his sayings have often a very direct and specific reference. With respect, for example, to divorce, to oaths, to the Sabbath, or to the duty of paying tribute, his teachings will be imperfectly apprehended unless we

understand the practical abuses and vehement controversies which existed among his hearers as to those subjects. On such points the best Commentaries give some information. Or, to take a different kind of example, the words "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6 : 44), were not spoken as a mere general, didactic utterance, much less were they addressed to humble and anxious inquirers, but were aimed at an utterly unspiritual rabble, who were following him not from any elevated motives, but from mere fanatical excitement, and in the hope of continuing to be fed without working for it — who called themselves his disciples, and talked about forcing him to set up for king. The recollection of all this does not weaken the force of what he said, but it helps us to appreciate his specific aim at the moment, and gives us an important example as to the adaptation of doctrine. The more one attends to the subject the more he is likely to become convinced, that almost everything in the New Testament, as well as much in the Old, is really controversial in its specific design, and that we must constantly inquire what errors or evil practices are aimed at, in order to appreciate the precise bearing given, in any text, to the principles it may contain, and the modifications of statement which may be necessary (*mutatis mutandis*) in turning these principles towards new applications.

4. Interpret figuratively, where there is sufficient reason. Wherever it is clear, from the nature of the case, from the connection, or from precisely similar expressions in other passages, that the literal sense is not designed, then we must understand figuratively. In the language of Scripture, as in all other language, the presumption is in favor of the literal sense. To explain away as figurative whatever seems to conflict with doctrinal prejudices, or with fanciful notions and morbid feelings as to ethics or

æsthetics, or with hasty inferences from imperfectly established scientific facts, is to trifle with that which we acknowledge as an authoritative revelation. Still, there is very much in Scripture that is clearly figurative; and very much more which might so readily be thus understood, in the light of other Scripture usage, that we ought to be careful about building important theories upon its literal sense. This is especially true as regards prophecies of things yet to come, in which it is of necessity quite difficult to distinguish beforehand between literal and figurative, though the fulfilment will some day make it plain. And remember that language may be highly figurative without being fictitious. Only ascertain what the figures of Scripture were designed to mean, and that meaning is as certainly true as if stated in plain words. Thus the "fire that cannot be quenched" may be called a figure, if you choose; yet it assuredly means that in hell there will be something as bad as fire, something as torturing as fire is to the earthly body—nay, the reality of hell, as well as of heaven, does no doubt greatly transcend the most impressive imagery that earthly things can afford.*

5. Interpret allegorically, where that is clearly proper. We cannot take it for granted that any passage has an allegorical, or so-called "spiritual" sense, merely because the notion suits our fancy, or would promote our convenience. There must be good reason to think so. Whatever the New Testament so uses, is certainly allegorical; whatever else is precisely similar to matters so used in the New Testament, is very probably allegorical. Farther than this, we have surely no right to go. We may derive illustration, our own illustration, of spiritual things from perhaps everything in Scripture history, prophecies and proverbs, as we may from profane history and from nature;

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* Comp. Barrows, Companion to the Bible, chap. 35; Lord, Laws of Figurative Language.

but we have no more right to present the former as interpretation, than the latter. Joseph furnishes a good illustration, in certain respects, of Christ; and so does the Athenian, who held up his mutilated arm before the people to plead for his brother. Why then, merely because we can draw illustration from the case of Joseph, shall we call him a "type" of Christ? Moreover, because *some things* in the Levitical rites, the history of Joshua, David or Cyrus, the Proverbs of Solomon, or the book of Isaiah, have in addition to their natural sense, an allegorical reference to Christ, it does not follow that *everything* comprised therein has such a reference. As to the whole subject, we must avoid extremes; and it would seem to be a good rule as to preaching, that while probable allegorical meanings may be adduced, as probable, in the progress of a discourse, no allegorical meaning shall be taken as a *text*, which does not result from an interpretation having clear warrant in Scripture usage. And two things deserve to be carefully borne in mind. The rage for "spiritualizing causes many to overlook, or practically neglect, the exceedingly varied and valuable lessons as to Divine Providence and human duty which are afforded by passages in their natural sense. Those who insist on making Joseph a type of Christ, are apt never to hold up before their hearers his interesting and impressive example, of steadfast faith in God amid crushing adversity and sudden prosperity, of resistance to powerful temptation because yielding would be to "sin against God," of wise affection in dealing with his kindred, and the like. So in a thousand instances, and there is here one way in which compensation may be found for the loss arising from the abandonment of wild spiritualizing. The other consideration is, that many passages which can be interpreted only, so far as we have warrant to go, in a natural sense, may yield copious instruction as to properly spiritual things, in that the principle they contain, or the analogy they present, may be by us applied or extended to something spiritual — this being done on our own responsibility, yet sustained by manifest propriety, and by other passages.

6. Interpret in accordance with, and not contrary to, the general teachings of Scripture.* These teachings are harmonious, and can be combined into a symmetrical whole. If a passage may have two senses, owing to the ambiguity of some word or construction, to the doubt whether some expression is figurative, etc., then we must choose one which accords with what the Bible in general plainly teaches, rather than one which would make the Bible contradict itself. It is a gross abuse of this principle — though one often practised — to force upon a passage some meaning which its words and constructions do not grammatically admit of, in order that it may give the sense required by our system. But between possible grammatical meanings we are compelled to choose upon some principle, and certainly one important principle to be considered is that the teachings of Scripture must be consistent. Where the grammatical probabilities are pretty evenly balanced, a comparatively slight preference in the respect mentioned must turn the scale; and even a much less probable sense — provided it be grammatically possible, and sustained by some corresponding usage of language — may be preferred to a more probable and common sense, if the former would perfectly accord, and the latter would grossly conflict, with the acknowledged general teachings of Scripture. In order to apply this principle with propriety and safety, it is manifestly necessary that we should bring to bear no narrow and hasty views

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* The phrase, "according to the analogy of faith," commonly used in this connection, was derived from a misunderstanding of the Greek in Rom. 12 : 6, and ought to be abandoned, even if there be no technical phrase to substitute.

of Scripture teaching, but the results of a wide, thoughtful, and devout study of Biblical Theology.

The careful examination of Scripture "references" in studying a text, is a matter of great importance. These will often help in the grammatical part of interpretation, by showing how the same words and phrases are elsewhere employed; and in the historical, by showing how the same subject was presented under different circumstances, or what was the peculiar state of things in which the text was uttered. They may also assist us, by presenting parallel or analogous Scripture usage, in determining whether expressions of the text ought to be taken as figurative, or as allegorical; and there are cases in which even a few other passages will so far set forth the general teachings of Scripture on the subject involved in the text, as to be of service in choosing among the possible meanings of its language. Moreover, the "reference" passages will very often furnish useful material for the body of the sermon, suggesting to us new aspects, proofs, illustrations or applications of the subject treated. The young preacher should make it a fixed rule to consult the references to his text; and many men and women have become "mighty in the Scriptures," by the diligent use of references in their daily reading.*

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* Moody's New Testament is quite convenient, as it prints the reference passages in full on the same page. One can thus readily note those which strike him as important, and then hunt them up to examine their connection. Many persons become discouraged in the use of references by the fact that they have an over-copious and ill-chosen collection. The Annotated Paragraph Bible of the London Religious Tract Society is in this respect, as in others, an exceedingly good edition.

CHAPTER III.

SUBJECTS—CLASSIFIED.

§ 1. Doctrinal Subjects. § 2. Subjects of Morality. § 3 Historical Subjects. § 4. Experimental Subjects. § 5. Occasional Sermons.

WHETHER the subject or the text of a sermon is first chosen, will of course depend upon circumstances. In considering the condition of the congregation, or looking back over the sermons recently preached, one will be more likely to decide upon a *subject*, for which he must then find a text. In reading the Bible, or running over his growing list of texts, he will be more apt to light upon some *text* which interests him, and from which he will proceed to evolve a subject. Each of these plans ought to be frequently pursued; one or the other will be more frequently adopted, according to the preacher's turn of mind. It has been thought best to discuss the text first, because the primary conception of preaching is to bring forth the teachings of some passage of Scripture. But the points to be insisted on are these: when the subject is first selected, then carefully look for a text which will fairly, and if possible exactly, present that subject; if the text comes first, then seek to work out from it some definite subject—not necessarily expressed in a single proposition, but really one subject. Even in text-sermons and expository sermons, as we shall see below, it is important to have unity of subject. The subjects treated in the pulpit may be classified into doctrinal, moral, historical, experimental, and occasional.* Any such classification is necessarily imperfect, as the classes will in certain cases overlap, and different persons might classify, each according to a different basis. But the habit of referring every subject to a class will be found useful, as contributing to unity and consistency of treatment, and to variety of topics; and the discussion of these classes furnishes occasion for practical suggestions, upon matters of no little importance.

§ 1. DOCTRINAL SUBJECTS.

The phrase "doctrinal sermon" is constantly used by some to denote sermons on points of denominational peculiarity or controversy. Such a limitation, implying that these are the only doctrines, or that we cannot discuss doctrine otherwise than polemically, is a really grave error, and should be carefully avoided and corrected.

Doctrine, i. e. teaching, is the preacher's chief business. Truth is the life-blood of piety, without which we cannot maintain its vitality or support its activity. And to teach men truth, or to quicken what they already know into freshness and power, is the preacher's great means of doing good. The facts and truths which belong to the Scripture account of Sin, Providence and Redemption, form the staple of all Scriptural preaching. But these truths ought not simply to have place, after a desultory and miscellaneous fashion, in our preaching. The entire body of Scripture teaching upon any particular subject, when collected and systematically arranged, has come to be called the *doctrine* of Scripture on that subject, as the doctrine of Sin, of Atonement, of Regeneration, etc.; and in this sense we ought to preach much on the *doctrines* of the Bible. We all regard it as important that the preacher

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*** Comp. the classifications of Vinet, p. 75; Kidder, p. 268.**

should himself have sound views of doctrine; is it not also important that he should lead his congregation to have just views? In our restless nation and agitated times, in these days of somewhat bustling religious activity, there has come to be too little of real doctrinal preaching. "The day was when churches were much more concerned than we, about the truths conveyed, and much less about the garb of the truths. Doctrine, rather than speaking, was what drew the audience." * To a certain extent it is proper that we should conform to the tastes of the age, for they frequently indicate its real wants, and always affect its reception of truth; but when those tastes are manifestly faulty, we should earnestly endeavor to correct them. The preacher who can make doctrinal truth interesting as well as intelligible to his congregation, and gradually bring them to a good acquaintance with the doctrines of the Bible, is rendering them an inestimable service.

And let us preach especially on the *great* doctrines. True, they are familiar, but sermons upon them need not be commonplace. The sunlight is as fresh every morning as when it shone upon our first parents in their Paradise; young love is still as sweet, and parental grief as heart-rending, as was theirs. And so the great doctrines of the Gospel, to him who has eyes to see and a heart to feel them, are forever new. Our task is, loving these truths ourselves, to make others love them. Many a preacher could tell, how in the early months or years of his untutored ministry, he was sometimes driven, from sheer lack of a novel topic, to fall back upon Repentance, Regeneration, or the like, and make what he felt to be a poor sermon; and how, long afterwards, he heard of fruit from those sermons rather than from others which he at the time considered much more striking and impressive.* Of course one should not make a hobby of a particular doctrine, as some men do with the doctrine of Election, or of Baptism; and some others with Perfection, the Witness of the Spirit, &c.

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* Alexander, Thoughts on Preaching, p. 50; he repeatedly and earnestly insists on doctrinal preaching, see p. 10–12, 42–3, 51, 234–6, 249–52

While, however, we ought to preach much upon the great doctrines, it is not often advisable, especially for a settled pastor, to embrace the whole of such a doctrine in a single sermon. This would contain the mere generalities of the subject, and be very difficult to the hearer, or, more frequently, quite commonplace. It is a common delusion of inexperienced speakers or writers, to think that they had best take a very broad subject, so as to be sure of finding enough to say. But to choose some one aspect of a great subject is usually far better, as there is thus much better opportunity for the speaker to work out something fresh, and much better prospect of making the hearers take a lively interest in the subject as a whole. Alexander, writing to a son at college, says: "The more *special* the subject, the more you will find to say on it. Boys think just the reverse. They write of Virtue, Honor, Liberty, &c.; it would be easier to write on the pleasures of Virtue, the Honor of Knighthood, or the difference between true and false Liberty — which are more special. Take it as a general rule, the more you narrow the subject, the more thoughts you will have. And for this there is a philosophical reason, which I wish you to observe. In acquiring knowledge, the mind proceeds *from particulars to generals.* Thus Newton proceeded from the falling of an apple to the general principle of gravity. A great many particular observations were to be made on animals, before a naturalist could lay down the general law, that all creatures with cleft hoofs and horns, are graminivorous . . . . . . This process is called generalization. It is one of the last to be developed. Hence it requires vast knowledge and a mature mind to treat a general subject, such as Virtue, or Honor, and it is much better to begin with particular instances." * And this applies not merely to the preacher's power of treatment, but to the hearer's power of comprehension. When he becomes fully able to discuss large subjects in a single discourse, the great mass of his hearers will still be unable to follow him, unless the discourse be so long as to include copious details. And besides all this, the settled pastor cannot often afford to consume so much material in a single sermon. The exceptional cases, as a series of sermons on several great doctrines, the existence of special interest in some one doctrine, &c., will of course be treated as exceptions.

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* Comp. on Familiar Texts, above, chap. 1, § 3.

The specific aspects of a great doctrine may sometimes be chosen according to the natural divisions of the subject itself. In this matter, and in all that pertains to preaching upon doctrinal subjects, we must carefully bear in mind the distinction between a theological treatise or lecture and a popular sermon. The scientific analysis and elaborate logic of the one is seldom appropriate to the other. The parts of a subject which require most attention, and excite most interest, on the part of a systematic student, may be least suitable to preaching, and *vice versa*. The knowledge presupposed by the theological teacher, cannot usually be taken for granted as existing in a congregation. Young ministers often help to make doctrinal subjects unpopular, by the fact that their sermons too closely resemble the treatises they have been studying, or the lectures they have heard. We must assume a different point of view; must consider which aspects of a doctrine will awaken interest in the popular mind, and at the same time help to give just views of the whole. Besides the important differences between the merely didactic and the oratorical mode of *treatment*, there is here a previous difference as to the choice of subjects and parts of subjects to be treated.

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* Thoughts on Preaching, p. 512.

Or instead of selecting according to the logical divisions of the doctrine, we may take the aspect of it presented by some one text. Thus on Repentance, one might preach upon its nature, its results, the obligations to it, etc., hunting up a text for each; or, he might begin by selecting among the texts which treat of repentance. For example, Mark 6 : 12, "And they went out and preached that men should repent," would suggest a general view of repentance, or an inquiry into its obligation. Acts 5 : 31, "Him hath God exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," presents repentance as a gift of Christ. Acts 20 : 21, "Testifying . . . . . repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," brings up the relation between repentance and faith; and Matt. 3 : 11, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," that between repentance and baptism. Various distinct and impressive motives to repentance are exhibited by Rom. 2 : 4, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance;" Acts 3 : 16, "Repent . . . . that your sins may be blotted out;" Luke 13 : 3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" Acts 17 : 30, 31, "God . . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness;" Luke 15 : 10, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And Matt. 3 : 8, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," would lead one to speak of the appropriate effects of repentance.* A person well acquainted with the whole doctrine of Repentance could treat the view presented by any one of these texts as a part of the whole, so as gradually to give a complete knowledge of the entire subject, while each sermon would have the freshness and force belonging to a specific topic.

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* Comp. Ripley, Sac. Rhet. p. 32

Besides the properly doctrinal, i. e. didactic, there are apologetical and polemical subjects.

Apologetics,* that is, the Evidences of Christianity, and its defence against assailants, is a class of subjects not often requiring, in our ordinary preaching, to be formally treated.

"We suspect that this great cause has been not a little injured by the injudicious conduct of a certain class of preachers and writers, who, in just despair of being able to handle a single topic of religion to advantage, for want of having paid a devout attention to the Scriptures, fly like harpies to the evidences of Christianity, on which they are certain of meeting with something prepared to their hands, which they can tear, and soil, and mangle at their pleasure. . . . . . The folly we are adverting to did not escape the observation nor the ridicule of Swift, who remarked in his days that the practice of mooting on every occasion the question of the origin of Christianity was much more likely to unsettle the faith of the simple than to counteract the progress of infidelity. It is dangerous to familiarize every promiscuous audience to look upon religion as a thing which yet remains to be proved, to acquaint them with every sophism and cavil which a perverse and petulant ingenuity has found out, unaccompanied, as is too often the case, with a satisfactory answer; thus leaving the poison to operate, without the antidote, in minds which ought to be strongly imbued with the principles and awed by the sanctions of the gospel. It is degrading to the dignity of a revelation established through a succession of ages by indubitable proofs, to be adverting every moment to the hypothesis of its being an imposture, and to be inviting every insolent sophist to wrangle with us about the title, when we should be cultivating the possession. The practice we are now censuring is productive of another inconvenience. The argument of the truth of Christianity being an argument of accumulation, or, in other words, of that nature that the force of it results less from any separate consideration than from an almost infinite variety of circumstances, conspiring towards one point and terminating in one conclusion; this concentration of evidence is broken to pieces when an attempt is made to present it in superficial descants; than which nothing can be conceived better calculated to make what is great appear little, and what is ponderous light." *

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* The word 'apology' originally signified a defence, without any acknowledgment of wrong.

But informally, incidentally, we may all make very frequent and profitable use of Christian Evidences. Without at all treating the question of the truth of Christianity as an open one, and without undertaking any full and regular discussion of its claims, or refutation of objections to it, we may introduce into ordinary sermons some subordinate division, or passing remark, that will vividly exhibit one of the evidences, or strikingly refute some particular objection This course meets any rising doubts in one mind or another, and precisely suits the mental wants and habits of most men, and is thus the fairest way of bringing the subject before them. Even if one sees cause for an expressly apologetical sermon or series of sermons, he had better select some part of the great subject, and barely allude to, or rapidly touch, the others. Whatever matters are distinctly brought forward, ought to be thoroughly discussed. Let us beware how we merely mention some striking form of error, or plausible objection to truth, without meeting it very squarely, if not at all points. Every one has observed, what Mr. Hall intimates, that the error often remains in the mind, while the imperfect refutation is forgotten; and the reason for this is not far to seek. Errors often find their chief power in the fact that they consist of truth torn away from its connection, and held up in an excessive prominence, or without the limitation and modification which would be given by its related truths. A fragment of truth thus held up may make its delusive impression in a single moment. The apologist must carefully replace the truth, and bring the hearers to look

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* Robert Hall, Review of Gregory's Evidences, Works II, p. 299

closely at all the surrounding truths, and consider their relation to that which has been dislocated. But this is often a work of time, requiring wider knowledge than the audience possess or he can readily impart, and more reflection than the heedless many are willing to bestow. It is unfair to the truth if we neglect this fact, and expect a brief statement of some novel and seductive error to be sufficiently met by an equally brief reply.

The internal, and experimental evidences may be very readily preached upon with advantage. The beautiful harmony of the sacred books, with all their rich diversity, the effects of Christianity upon civilization, the adaptation of the gospel to the wants of an awakened conscience, the believer's testimony on the ground of experience, the blessed results of piety, and the powerful example of the truly pious, are topics which may be widely and freely used.

Polemics, or controversy with other professed Christians presents subjects which demand faithful and careful handling. The spurious charity, now so much talked of, which requires that we shall not assail error in our fellow-Christians, the indifference to truth so widely prevailing, which prates of the "good in everything," and urges that a man's belief is of little importance if he is intellectual, or amiable, or moral and devout, these make some men unwilling to preach upon polemical topics, especially to discuss the errors of other evangelical denominations. The natural love of conflict, which even in preachers is sometimes so strong, the lively interest which the ungodly will take in a fight among Christians, the hearty support and laudation which a man's own party will give him, often precisely in proportion as he flatters their self-conceit and bitterly assails their opponents, —such causes as these contribute to make another class of men excessively fond of controversy. And then the two classes really stimulate and encourage each other. The former being greatly disgusted at what they reckon bad taste and a wrong spirit, are thus all the more disposed to shrink from such topics; and the latter, being fired by what appears to them cowardice or worldly policy, are all the more bitter against the common foe, and inclined to assail their friends to boot. In this way two tendencies often arise in a denomination, each toward a very hurtful extreme. Is there not a golden mean? It would seem to be a just principle, that a preacher should never go out of his way to find controversial matter, nor go out of his way to avoid it. He who continually shrinks from conflict should stir himself up to faithfulness; he who is by nature belligerent, should cultivate forbearance and courtesy. When the text or topic naturally leads us to remark upon some matter of controversy, we should not, save in exceptional cases, avoid it, because esteemed Christians are present who differ with us on that point. We should of course be mainly occupied with the advocacy of positive truth; but the idea that a man can always "talk about what he himself believes, and let other people's opinions alone," is impracticable, if it were not improper. In many cases we cannot clearly define truth, save by contrasting it with error. And since errors held and taught by good men are only the more likely to be hurtful to others, we are surely not less bound to refute them in such cases than when advocated by bad men. Paul employs terms of terrible severity, as his Master had done, in speaking of some who taught utterly ruinous error and from bad motives.* Paul also withstood to the face, before all the brethren, his beloved but now erring fellow-apostle, using against him hard arguments, but soft words.† Afterwards, in speaking of the matter, he charges Peter with dissimulation, a charge justifiable because he knew with certainty that it was true. We, who are so liable to err in judging, ought to be very slow to impugn the motives of those whom we believe to be lovers of Jesus. No doubt Satan rejoices, as we know that wicked men do, to see Christians adding abuse to argument. While faithfully and earnestly opposing error, even as held by Christian brethren, let us avoid needlessly wounding the cause of our common Christianity.

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* Phil. 3 : 2; Gal. 6 : 12; 1 Tim. 4 : 1, 2; 2 Tim. 4 : 14. Comp. Matt. 23 : 33; 3 John, 10.

† Gal. 2 : 11–21

It is not unfrequently the wisest policy as regards certain forms of error, to leave them unnoticed. In the excitement about Romanism, which its boldness and boasting has recently awakened in our country, there is reason to fear that many will fall to preaching against the Romanists where they are little known, and thus only help to bring them into notice. While well assured that their grievous errors can be refuted, we ought to remember that those errors are subtle and to some minds seductive, and that here, just as in the case of infidel theories and objections, slight and hasty refutation is often worse than none. So too, there are some minor religious denominations, whose vital breath is controversy, and who will most surely die when they are most severely let alone.

§ 2. SUBJECTS OF MORALITY.

We sometimes hear pious men speak with severe reprobation of "moral sermons." It has often been the case, for example, in the Church of England during the 18th century, and among American Unitarians at the present time, that morality was preached with little or no reference to the Atonement and the work of the Spirit, a mere morality taking the place of the real gospel. This has established an association, in many minds, between moral discourses and opposition to the "doctrines of grace." But our Lord's personal teachings consist mainly of morality; and Paul and Peter, while unfolding and dwelling on the salvation which is by grace through faith, have not merely urged in general a holy life, but have given many precepts with reference to particular, and sometimes minor duties. No one among us will question, that we ought constantly to exhort believers to show their faith by their works, and to be holy in all their deportment, seeing that theirs is a holy God. But there is in many quarters a reluctance, for the reason just mentioned, to preach much upon particular questions of moral duty. A preacher of the gospel has certainly no business preaching morality apart from the gospel. He may present other than strictly evangelical motives, but these must be manifestly subordinate to the great motive of grateful love to Christ, and consecration to His service. We should exhort men to keep the law of God, for thus they may be brought to Christ; but to incite unregenerate people to a so-called moral life, on the ground merely of interest, of regard for the well-being of society, and even of love for their children, etc., is for the preacher unsuitable, save in very peculiar cases. He must first call men, as an ambassador for Christ, to be reconciled to God, must insist upon the indispensable need of regeneration through the Holy Spirit. Then, speaking to those who are looked upon as regenerate, he must, with all his might, urge them to true and high morality, not only on all other grounds, but as a solemn duty to God their Saviour. The only question is, how far he ought to go into details. As above intimated, our Lord and his apostles did go into details, very freely. And our preaching often suffers from the fact that, while inculcating Christian morality in general, we do not bring the matter home to the hearts and daily lives of our brethren, do not so delineate their practical experiences, and indicate their duty in practical questions, as to make them feel stimulated and encouraged in the actual pursuit of holiness.* At the same time, these questions are innumerable and often complicated and difficult, and we are compelled to select.

Now certain limitations, as to the preaching of particular morality, appear to be important. We must not make formal discussion of very minute topics. "Represent to yourself, for example, sermons on neatness, on politeness, etc. Some topics of this sort, doubtless, may be approached, but it must be done incidentally; they should never furnish the subject of a sermon. Particular morality is not to be excluded, but such details of it may have their place in more general matters, or in historical subjects."† It is one of the advantages of expository preaching, whether doctrinal or historical, that it gives occasion for many useful incidental remarks upon minor morals, for which we might never find a place in formal subject-sermons. A *second* limitation is, that the inculcation of morality must not consume the greater part of our time, for it is our chief business to entreat men to be reconciled to God, and the "doctrines of grace" are the great means of making believers "careful to maintain good works."‡ And it is a *third* limitation, that we must not so enter into particular questions of morality, as to make the preaching of the gospel merely tributary to secular interests, and apparently to sink the preacher in the partisan.

Political preaching has long been a subject of vehement discussion in America, and presents questions of great importance. In Europe, the almost universal connection of Church and State has embarrassed the subject with complications from which we are free. Government here does not interfere with religion, to support some, or to persecute others; and we have in this respect no occasion to discuss governmental affairs. Still, political measures often involve, and are sometimes almost identical with, great questions of right and wrong. The notion that political decisions are to be regularly made on grounds of mere expediency, is dishonoring to the religion which many of us profess, and would ultimately ruin any nation. That truly pious men shall carry their religion into politics, shall keep religious principle uppermost in all political questions which have a moral character, is an unquestionable and solemn duty. Of course it is right that the preacher should urge them to do so; and should urge it with special earnestness in times of great political excitement, when good men are often carried away. Now we have observed above that in other matters it is well not merely to insist upon morality in general, but to go somewhat into details, thus illustrating general truth, and offering hints for practical guidance. Why then, it may be asked, shall we not do likewise in reference to political matters, where it is often as difficult as it is important for a good man to decide upon his duty? Why shall not the preacher go somewhat into details here? The great difficulty is, that it is almost impossible for a preacher to do this without taking sides. In a country where party feeling runs so high, the great mass of the people, too, being still ungodly, to take sides at all, in public discourse, will cause the preacher to be at once swept away by the rushing tide. He ceases to sustain an impartial relation to all the people over whom he is shepherd, and becomes, in a matter which with many is more important than religion, the friend of some, the foe of others. The irreligious, and many of the brethren, forget all about the religious aims of his preaching, in the one absorbing inquiry how much he will help or harm their party. Thus has many a good man, who was honestly striving to bring politics under the control of religious principle, been brought, before he knew it, into the position of a recognized political partisan. Upon perceiving such a result, some preachers at once draw back, wiser from their experience; but others, proud of consistency, resolved to conquer opposition, or unable to see just what their mistake is, and how to correct it, persevere, with deplorable results. The association which once connected them in the popular mind with unworldly feelings and eternal interests, is broken. Their power of turning men's eyes away from the things which are seen to the things which are not seen, is seriously diminished. They become comparatively unable to accomplish the great object which a good man in the ministry must cherish, the object of *saving souls.* Besides, the temporal benefits of Christianity are greatest just in proportion as there is most of true spirituality. Preachers do men most good as to this world in proportion as they bring them to care most for the world to come. In losing this higher power, then, one has likewise actually lost the most effectual means of advancing those lower ends at which he was aiming. While striving to bring some of the motive power to bear upon one subordinate work, he has left the boiler to burst, and now can do neither the greater nor the less.

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* There are good observations on this subject in Robert Hall's Works, II, p. 290 ff.

† Vinet, Hom. p. 83

‡ See Titus, 3 : 3–8, an important passage on this subject.

"To the Christian, everything becomes Christian. . . . . . . Nothing except sin is profane; life is not divided; there is no point at which Christianity stops abruptly . . . . . . This is not saying that because everyting is regarded by a Christian in a christian manner, everything may become a subject for a sermon. The pulpit has not been erected to treat all things in a christian manner; it has a special purpose, which is to introduce the christian idea into life. . . . In its principles, and in its particular applications, it is properly Christianity which it teaches: Christianity is uppermost; Christianity is its object; all else is but example, illustration, etc. . . . . . Whatever aims to advance society without doing this through the individual, (through the individual's christian advancement,) is external to the object of preaching. . . . . . As to *patriotic* and *political* sermons, they are rather to be avoided, and yet in certain grave circumstances, we may be obliged to touch upon such subjects in the pulpit. On one hand, the human character of Christianity puts it into contact with all the interests of life, gives it a word to speak in all circumstances; on the other hand, it never surrenders its liberty to place and time, and with extreme reserve, mixes itself with everything that does not bear the stamp of eternity. . . . . I believe, indeed, that we cannot wholly avoid discoursing to the public on that which preoccupies and absorbs it; but we must discourse to it only in order to calm or moderate it. Control worldly affairs without touching them; have to do with them only to impress a character upon them; show them to your hearers from the heights of heaven. See the Lord and his apostles. . . . . . . It is remarkable that *loving their nation* as they did, they should have approached political subjects with so much reserve."*

"The Christian preacher can do more towards promoting the earthly and temporal interests of mankind, by indirection, than by direct efforts. That minister who limits himself, in his Sabbath discourses, to the exhibition and enforcement of the doctrines of sin and grace, and whose preaching results in the actual conversion of human beings, contributes far more, in the long run, to the progress of society, literature, art, science, and civilization, than he does, who, neglecting these themes of sin and grace, makes a direct effort from the pulpit to 'elevate society.' In respect to the secular and temporal benefits of the Christian religion, it is eminently true, that he that finds his life shall lose it. When the ministry sink all other themes in the one theme of the Cross, they are rewarded in a twofold manner: they see the soul of man born into the kingdom of God; and then, as an inevitable consequence, with which they had little to do directly but which is taken care of by the providence of God, and the laws by which He administers his government in the earth, they also see arts, sciences, trade, commerce, and political prosperity, flowing in of themselves. They are willing to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and find all these minor things, — infinitely minor things, when compared with the eternal destiny of man, — added to them by the operation, not of the pulpit, or of the ministry, but of Divine laws and of Divine providence. But, whenever the ministry sinks the Cross, wholly or in part, in semi-religious themes, they are rewarded with nothing. They see, as the fruit of their labors, neither the conversion of the individual nor the prosperity of society. That unearthly sermonizing of Baxter, and Howe, so abstracted from all the temporal and secular interests of man, so rigorously confined to human guilt and human redemption, — that preaching which, upon the face of it, does not seem even to recognize that man has any relations to this little ball of earth; which takes him off the planet entirely, and contemplates him simply as a sinner in the presence of God, — that preaching, so destitute of all literary, scientific, economical, and political elements and allusions, — was, nevertheless, by indirection, one of the most fertile causes of the progress of England and America." *

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* Vinet, Hom. p. 71–4, and 86–7.

Many persons insist that the minister must have nothing to do with politics, not even to the extent of voting, or of the formation and private expression of political opinions. Some take this ground from false notions of the "clergyman's" position; but a Christian minister is no more a *priest* than a Christian layman, and nothing is intrinsically wrong to the one which is not to the other. Some urge as follows: "A minister may well be absolved from preaching, or even forming opinions on politics. He has the common right of all citizens so to do; but his proper work is enough for all his time and powers. The great themes of religious truth are enough to occupy more time than he can get." † But there is too much disposition among scholarly and refined men to leave voting to the masses and the demagogues. A well-informed man, in this country, cannot avoid the formation of opinions upon politics; and by voluntary ignorance of current affairs, more is lost by the working pastor than gained. The minister ought to have his opinions, and ought to vote; and he may state his views in private conversation, with more or less reserve according to circumstances. He should in the pulpit urge and conjure his Christian hearers to be controlled in their political action by Christian principle. To go into details, and suggest how they ought to vote in a particular issue, is lawful, but in general highly inexpedient; the little good done will almost certainly be overbalanced by the harm that in various ways must result. If a preacher ever takes such a course at all, it should be in very peculiar and extraordinary cases, and even then his discussion should be brief, well-considered, and temperate, and gladly abandoned for other themes If ever the great majority of controlling politicians should be truly pious men, it might be not inexpedient for the preacher to offer suggestions upon current political questions — but *then* it would be hardly worth while

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* Shedd, Hom. p. 248–9.

† Alexander, Thoughts on Preaching, p. 47.

There are other very important and difficult topics of particular morality, such as *Temperance*, and the question of *Amusements;* but a few remarks upon these must suffice. The preacher should by all means *avoid ultraism.* Some things not sinful in themselves, it is yet best to abstain from because they so readily and widely lead to sin. But here there is at once seen to be room for difference of opinion. Not everything should be avoided which is often grossly abused; and however clear it may seem to us that some particular thing should be, another man may perhaps judge otherwise. Even though vehement in condemnation, we must not be indiscriminate. And if in the natural desire to take strong ground we represent the use of intoxicating beverages, dancing, and games of amusement, as in themselves sinful, and under all circumstances wrong, we assume an extreme and false position, which must eventually weaken our cause. If discriminating and considerate views, leading to a regard for their example and influence, and a recognition of possible danger to themselves and their families, will not restrain men in these respects, then extravagance and violence, even if controlling a few, will in general but repel and provoke stimulating the wrong practices in question, and driving many away from the gospel. The world is full of great and dreadful evils, which may well excite both grief and indignation, and which call loudly for correction; but one evil is not to be cured by another. Again, we must not merely condemn the wrong, but *exhort to the right.* Preaching on these subjects too often consists merely in vehement assaults. Much more may be accomplished if we also encourage the right-minded to a proper course, and affectionately point out to them the beginnings of evil against which they must guard. The latter course may not afford so much occasion for impassioned and boisterous "eloquence," but it will hardly be on that account the less useful. Severe censure is sometimes necessary, but encouragement to do right is always in place, and often more potent. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching." * And finally, it is usually better to treat these subjects in the course of our *ordinary preaching*, than to make set sermons upon them. These may draw a crowd, if that is all, but the formal discussion invites criticism and awakens opposition, and even if really convincing, finds the persons most concerned particularly hard to convince. Arguments and appeals from time to time, as suggested by the subject or the occasion, will make no unfavorable impression, and steady perseverance will gradually call back and win over all whom it is possible to influence. Only, let not the preacher make any particular vicious practice or social usage his hobby; for then folks will but smile at all he can say.

§ 3. HISTORICAL SUBJECTS.

It would be unnecessary to urge that history is attractive for all who read, and full of varied instruction for all who read thoughtfully. And the most instructive history is that of the Bible. A leading writer on the philosophy of history has declared that no such philosophy can be constructed, save by the recognition of a providential purpose which pervades all events and links them into unity. In the Bible the designs of Providence are not left to be judged of by our sagacity, but are often clearly revealed, so as to show us the meaning of things obscure, and the real co-working of things apparently antagonistic. Thus the Bible histories act like the problems worked out in a treatise of Algebra, teaching us how to approach the other problems presented by the general history of the world. The oft-quoted saying of an ancient writer that "history is philosophy teaching by example," applies nowhere so truly as to the inspired records, which are God himself teaching by example.

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* 2 Tim. 4:2.

Moreover, nothing so interests us all as a person. No inanimate object, or general proposition, will make much impression upon mankind at large, unless it is personified or impersonated, or invested with some personal interest. The poet, delighting in nature, instinctively feels as if communing with a person. Even so abstract a thing as a system of philosophy, is usually remembered in connection with a personal teacher. A benevolent enterprise seldom takes much hold on the popular mind, unless it is associated with some honored man, its embodiment and representative. A celebrated lecturer on history once stated in conversation that he found it difficult to interest a popular audience, if he presented merely historical events, periods, or lessons; these must be associated with some person. Now the Bible not only consists very largely of history, but the greater part of its history is really biography, the story of individual lives, exhibiting the most various and instructive examples of character, both good and bad, of both sexes, and of every condition in life

And this great historical picture groups all its figures around one Person, to whom some look forward with longing and others look back with love, and whose very enemies unwillingly stand connected with him.

All this being true, it would seem that historical subjects of preaching ought to be much more frequently employed than is actually the case. Several reasons for the comparative neglect of them may be suggested. The greater part of devout ministers unwisely overlook the human elements in Scripture history. If not carried away by the passion for finding "types of Christ," so as to care little for the persons and events that cannot possibly be thus regarded, they still fail to study these histories as history. They do not trace the progress of events in the history of Israel as in that of any other nation, allowing for the occasional miraculous interferences, and searching amid the mingled web of Israel's affairs for the golden thread of Providential purpose. They do not analyze the character and motives of inspired men, as "men of like passions" with ourselves, men who struggled as we have to do, with their own infirmities and the thronging temptations of life. They shrink from contemplating the genuine but sinless *humanity* of the glorious central Person, which makes him so real and so unspeakably valuable an example for us, at the same time that he is our Divine Redeemer. As another reason, few ministers gain that minute and familiar acquaintance with Scripture Geography, with the manners and customs of the Jews and related nations, and with the profane history which comes into connection with Biblical events, which would enable them to realize the scenes and reproduce them with vivid coloring, so as to kindle the imagination of their hearers; nor do they cultivate, as all preachers should do, the power of description.*

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* See on Imagination, Part III, chap. 5, and comp. on Expos Preaching, Part II, chap. 3.

On the other hand some make historical subjects simply the occasion for displaying their descriptive powers, or exhibiting their archæological learning, without teaching any useful lessons, and thus establish an association in the minds of many hearers between historical sermons and mere "word-painting." And further, preachers who know or suppose themselves to have little talent for description are apt to forget that one of the chief benefits of historical preaching is derived from the analysis of character and motive. We all find it so hard to understand our fellow-men, or ourselves, that it is a great blessing to have in some Scripture examples the veil taken off, and the real motives and true character of men laid bare to our inspection; and in many other cases, to have suggestive and reliable indications to provoke and encourage enquiry. Living instances could be mentioned of very able men, who had rarely attempted historical subjects, because conscious of possessing little talent for description; but when the simple suggestion was made that they could bring to bear their analytical powers upon the character of some Scripture personage or the motives of the actors in some Scripture scene, they soon found themselves much interested in historical discourses, and found, too, that they could throw in excellent touches of description by the way.

The history of Christianity outside of the Bible, from the earliest times to our own, furnishes much instructive and interesting material for preaching; but to draw the subject of a sermon from this source would be unwise. A sermon upon the life and character of Augustine, Calvin, Wesley, Fuller, Hall or Judson might be really useful, but the tendency would be towards one of the abuses of Romanism; substituting panegyrics of the saints for Biblical preaching.

§ 4. EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS.

Historical subjects manifestly include doctrinal and moral elements; and yet those subjects have really a distinct character. In like manner experimental subjects partake of the doctrinal, the moral, and the historical, but are so distinct, and of such importance, as to deserve separate classification and notice. The actual experiences of men in receiving the gospel and living according to it ought to be delineated; always under the guidance of Scripture doctrine, precept, and examples, but still delineated as we find them to be. Such matters will enter largely into the substance of many discourses whose *subject* is doctrinal, moral, or historical; but the chief phases of religious experience deserve to be somewhat frequently made the subject of special and careful discussion. Material for this purpose is to be drawn from the Bible, from treatises bearing on the subject, and biographies, from the preacher's own experience, and with particular advantage from frequent conversation with richly experienced Christians, making allowance for their peculiarities of temperament and theological opinion, and for their degrees of culture. The preacher, like the physician, ought in addition to what is learned from books, to "study cases," as they arise in his practical labors.

It would surely be very useful sometimes to depict the life of an irreligious man, as it is now going forward on week-days and Sundays, in business and in society and at home; to do this without exaggerating in order to make a striking picture, without ignoring the man's better impulses, good intentions, kindly affections, etc. — to make him out, so far as possible, just what he is. After pondering the matter, and asking a good many thoughtful questions of some intelligent brethren as to their personal recollections, a preacher might be able, modestly and with good success to treat such a subject. It is not uncommon to describe Conviction of Sin, the various methods in which it is wrought, and the causes by which it is often weakened and brought to nothing. So with Conversion. Accounts of conversion in persons differing in temperament, religious education, etc., carefully analyzed, so as to distinguish the general from the peculiar, are always interesting, and may be made exceedingly profitable. The early Baptist preachers who travelled from New England to Georgia, preaching depravity, atonement and regeneration to an ignorant and gainsaying people, often made a great impression and gave most important instruction, by telling their own experience. And then the varieties of experience in the Christian life—what subjects they afford for preaching. The Christian's Conflicts; Backsliding and Progress; Despondency and Assurance; Sickness and Bereavement,—these are often discussed in every evangelical pulpit.*

To speak at all of our own experience is a task to be performed with special prayer for humility and delicacy, lest we injure our own character, and repel hearers of fastidious tastes. But most of us shrink too readily from this duty. The apostle Paul has spoken frequently, and sometimes at great length, of his conversion, the trials, conflicts and consolations of his subsequent life, and of his present purposes and hopes; and the Psalms consist almost entirely of recorded experiences. One thing, however, is to be specially guarded against, in all attempts at depicting religious experience, and especially in allusions to our own; we are so apt to imagine, or at least to speak as if we imagined, that all experiences will be like ours. A preacher or other Christian whose conversion was consciously sudden will almost always speak of conversion as sudden; one in whom the work was gradual and slow, will give a corresponding description. So with the hopeful and the desponding, the fully assured and the often doubting, etc. We are prone to forget that Christian experience, like the human countenance, will in no two persons be precisely alike, and often presents many and striking differences, though the great characteristic features are always the same.

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* See some good remarks in Wayland's Ministry of the Gospel, p 86–96.

§ 5. OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

It is convenient to offer at this point a few suggestions as to sermons on particular occasions, or addressed to particular classes.

Funeral Sermons are demanded by so powerful a sentiment and sustained by so general usage, that the attempts of some to abolish the custom, inevitably fail. Those who clearly see and vehemently condemn the faults which disfigure many funeral discourses, are very apt, when themselves bereaved, to find their hearts demanding such a service, and will not unfrequently prefer the very preacher whose course had often seemed to them most objectionable. Sorrowing and softened, we feel then a special need of God's mercy and grace, and the preacher should gladly seize the opportunity to recommend the gospel of consolation, and to impress the need of personal piety, that we may be ready to live and ready to die. And not only will some habitual hearers be then better prepared to receive the word, but persons will be present who seldom attend the place of worship. It is highly important, therefore, that funeral sermons should clearly point out the way of life, and tenderly invite to the Saviour. Moreover, in the freshness of our grief we instinctively desire to utter, or at least to hear, some eulogy upon the departed; and all nations have had some method, by speech or song or broken lament, of indulging the desire. That among us

Christian ministers are expected to perform this function while it sometimes places them in a difficult position, is yet a sign of their influence, and a means of using that influence to good purpose. But the preacher must remember that he is not a mere eulogist of the dead, but only adds this task to his work of preaching the gospel. Accordingly, his utterances as to the departed must be only a part of what he says, usually but a small part, and must be *scrupulously true.* No promptings of his own sorrow, nor regard for the feelings of others, must lead him to the exaggerated praises which are so natural. When the departed was a Christian, he should speak chiefly of that fact, bringing out anything in the character or course of life which he knows, and others will recognize, to be worthy of imitation. When it was not a Christian, he may sometimes lawfully speak a few soothing words as to anything which specially endeared the deceased to his friends. But this must be done, if done at all, without exaggeration, and it is a solemn duty to avoid saying one word which suggests that these good points of character afford any ground of hope for eternity. Some preachers will on such occasions give the lie to all their ordinary preaching, by leaving room to suppose that without being born again a very excellent person may perhaps see the kingdom of God. "He did not make any profession of religion, *but* he was, etc., etc., and we leave him to the mercy of God." Or, "he had never professed to be a Christian, *but* he was perfectly willing to die"—as if that proved anything. Nay, if the deceased did not give evidence of being regenerate, a believer in Christ, let us say nothing about his eternal future, nothing whatever. Any such suggestions encourage the ignorant or unthinking in false hopes, and to right-minded mourners are but a mockery of their woe. Pains should be taken not to make much of death-bed conversions, which are proverbially uncertain, and the hope of which, as a last resort, is so often taken by the living as an encouragement to delay. In general, the preacher ought to exercise reserve in what he says of the departed; and in the case of wicked people, it is frequently in the best taste, and shows the most real kindness, to say nothing. Young preachers sometimes allow themselves, in their first sermons of this sort, to indulge in copious eulogies with no great foundation, and then afterwards seem compelled to do likewise in cases where they feel it to be a great trial, and know that they are liable to do serious harm to the cause of truth. It will save much embarrassment to begin right.

The services on such occasions, and especially the sermon, are often made too long. "A prevailing fault of funeral discourses is the occupation of too much time with generalities or truths that have no special application to the existing circumstances. It is far better to confine such discourses to narrower limits, and to that particular range of thought which all will recognize to be pertinent." * The tendency to ostentatious parade in funerals, which is in some communities a great evil, ought in every judicious way to be discouraged.

Academic Sermons, i. e. sermons at institutions of learning, or on occasions of literary interest, are often managed in a very mistaken fashion. The preacher imagines that he must not give a regular gospel sermon, but must betake himself to matters highly erudite or metaphysical. It is really desirable on such occasions to preach upon eminently evangelical topics, the very heart of the gospel. Science and erudition are the every-day work of these professors and students; from you, to-day, they had much rather hear something else. Even those who care nothing for religion will feel, as persons of taste, that it is congruous, becoming, for a preacher to preach the gospel; while the truly pious, yearning over their unconverted associates, will long to have the preacher urge saving truth upon them in the most practical way, and with whole-souled earnestness. Of course the sermon should have point, force, freshness; and the associations of the occasion may sometimes suggest slight peculiarities of allusion, illustration, and style; but it ought to be a sermon full of Christ, full of prayerful zeal to save souls. Ah! as one looks over those hundreds of intelligent young faces, and his heart goes out to them in sympathy and love,—as he thinks what a power they will be in the world for good or for evil, and how they are all there present before God, to hear his message, he must surely feel an unwonted emotion, a solemn sense of privilege and responsibility; and if never before, there ought to be true of him then, those words of Baxter,

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* Kidder's Hom , p. 280, where there are other good remarks

> "I preached as never sure to preach again,
> And as a dying man to dying men."

In like manner, *Convention Sermons,* all sermons at the opening of any general religious assembly, are never so acceptable to devout hearts, and never so helpful to the objects of such an assembly, as when they are filled with the very essence of the gospel.

Of discourses addressed to particular classes, it is proposed to mention only *Sermons to Children.* Suggestions on this subject will of course also bear upon less formal addresses, in the Sunday School, etc. Every one notices how few persons succeed decidedly well in speaking to children. But many preachers possess greater power in this respect than they have ever exercised, because they have never devoted to the subject much either of reflection, observation, or heedful practice. Examples may be found of men who for years considered that they had no talent for speaking to children, and whose attempts were always comparative failures, and yet who afterwards became very popular and useful in this important department of preaching. Can any help be given towards the development of this power?

It has been frequently remarked that in the young child imagination is predominant; in the child of ten or twelve years, memory; and not until they are nearly grown, do the powers of abstraction and reasoning become active. It is to the two former classes that we commonly speak, whatever is aimed at older people being also addressed to the children. We see at once that it is necessary to avoid abstract terms, and formal processes of reasoning. Many preachers find this difficult because they are too much accustomed, even for the wants of the ordinary adult mind, to discourse upon gospel doctrine in an abstract and purely argumentative way; and learning how to preach to children may make them better preachers in general. Merely to refrain from using long words is not the thing needed Children understand polysyllables just as well as monosyllables, when they represent concrete, and familiar, o easily intelligible conceptions. Besides, those of a dozen years are not pleased at the appearance of excessive effort to use short words to them, as if they had no sense. Eschew, then, all abstract terms. And instead of argumentation, give them facts and truths, confidently stated, with the quiet air of authority to which children naturally bow. Let these facts and truths be so stated, described, or illustrated, as to awaken the imagination. The illustrations should generally be in the form of narrative, (as the Great Teacher's were,) and the stories and descriptions should be pictorial — not minutely finished pictures, for children weary of those, but with broad outlines, prominent features, and vivid touches of suggestive detail. Thus telling them what they will receive as interesting facts or important truth, and in such a way as to charm the imagination, we are able to reach the child's affections and conscience. Only through what appeals to the imagination can this be readily done.*

The children must feel that they are learning something, and must see that we are trying to do them good. However thoughtless, changeable, passionate, a child may be, its conscience is active. Every child quickly recognizes the propriety of our seeking to win it to love and serve the Lord and feels that something is lacking where this is not the case. However great the external attractions of a Sunday School, it will soon grow dull to the little ones if they do not learn, especially learn the Bible, and breathe there an atmosphere of genuine piety. The spasmodic efforts to keep up the interest which are sometimes observed in S. S. officers and speakers must only become more and more vehement and extravagant, if they are neglecting religious instruction and devotional impressiveness.

In dealing with such restless beings, variety is of course indispensable. If the same man speaks to them long, he must have great variety of matter, feeling, and utterance. Nothing pathetic, or even solemn, can long engage their attention, save under extraordinary circumstances; and it is therefore proper to make free use of the natural reaction between pathos and humor. The childish mind readily passes "from grave to gay," and almost as readily back again to what is grave. Few men can succeed well in speeches or sermons to children, unless they are able to employ at least a few touches of humor. But if some speakers through uniform gravity fail to maintain the interest, a still greater number at the present day indulge in such an excess and predominance of humor, as to fail of doing real good, and by degrees to lose the power even of holding the children's attention. The humor employed had best be delicate; it may be broad and grotesque, but never coarse or silly. It must be manifestly subordinate to a serious purpose. Children feel that you have no business seeking on that occasion, merely to amuse them; and the funniest story, the oddest saying, the wittiest allusion must by analogy or by contrast give impressiveness to something useful and serious, or else it is out of place, and ought to have been omitted. And a perpetual succession of merely funny things, will soon utterly pall upon the children's taste. The little ones that hear much speaking, grow to be keen critics; and it were well if some speakers could often hear their talk at home.*

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* On the province and power of Imagination, see Part III, chap. 5

Speak then, of interesting and instructive facts and truths, in concrete and familiar terms, without formal argument, analytical processes, or abstract ideas. Speak to the child's imagination, heart, and conscience. Speak with a prevailing seriousness, with an earnest desire to do them good. And if you would learn their range of ideas and their vocabulary, would find the door to their hearts, talk much with children, and allure them into talking freely to you.

There is at present usually too broad a difference in style and tone between *sermons* to children and *speeches* to them. If the sermons could be a little more familiar, and the speeches a good deal more serious, than is commonly the case, then suggestions for the one could without any appearance of incongruity apply to the other.

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* "He kept trying to make us laugh all the time, and I got mighty tired of that." "He told us about a little boy, and wound up like they always do, you know, 'And children, that little boy is here to-day.'" "He tried very hard to be funny, but I did n't feel like laughing." "O pa, *do* you think anybody ought to be saying so many foolish things, when he's talking about our Saviour?" "O me, I used to think that story was right funny, but I've heard it so often." Parents sometimes have difficulty in correcting the evil effects which are indicated by such sayings.

The remark may be added, as of great importance, that children are not to be addressed as pious, but as needing to become so; and that they have to become Christians in essentially the same way as adults, by repentance and faith, through the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Great mischief results from the fact that so many who speak to children seem not to perceive clearly, or to keep distinctly in mind, this unquestionable truth.

CHAPTER IV.

General Materials of Preaching — Originality, Borrowing, and Plagiarism. § 1. Materials Possessed Beforehand. § 2. Materials Provided at the Time of Preparation § 3. Original Materials. § 4. Borrowed Materials and Plagiarism.

§ 1. MATERIALS POSSESSED BEFOREHAND.

THE chief materials of a sermon are in the great mass of cases not really invented at the time of preparation; they are the results of previous acquisition and reflection. This is true even of much that seems to the preacher himself to have then for the first time a place in his mind; it is in fact the revival of something forgotten, or the development of something already known. In this respect inexperienced and comparatively uncultivated young preachers are often greatly deceived. Their early sermons are made with ease. Ardent, zealous, excited, they find that thought springs spontaneous in the mind, and feeling flows like a torrent. They imagine that it will always be easy to find something to say which will interest themselves and their hearers. But they are like men who have inherited a fortune in cash, and who spend their principal as if it were but income. Rejoicing in his facility of speech, the young preacher is not aware that he is drawing upon all that he has thought, felt, and seen, all that he has read and heard, since his childhood. And not a few go on for some months or years, consuming all their store, and evoking all that their minds are so constituted as readily to produce, and presently begin to wonder and lament that they find it so much harder than formerly to make a sermon. In like manner, preachers who are growing old sometimes complain that people will not listen to them as in other days, when the difficulty is that they have ceased to maintain activity of mind and good store of fresh thought; and unable to interest themselves, they of course cannot interest others. These somewhat frequent and very painful experiences only illustrate the proposition — we draw our sermons mainly from what we have wrought out or learned beforehand. And when the preacher speaks from great fulness of thought, then what he says borrows power from what is in reserve, as the head of water gives force to that which strikes upon the wheel. It follows that, next to the cultivation of personal piety, there is nothing for which the preacher should so earnestly labor, from his first call to the close of his life, as the acquisition of abundant general materials for preaching.

"The preacher ought to acquire and cultivate a homiletical habitude. Preaching is his business. For this he has educated himself, and to this he has consecrated his whole life. It should, therefore, obtain undisputed possession of his mind and his culture. He ought not [save in peculiar cases] to pursue any other intellectual calling than that of sermonizing. He may, therefore, properly allow this species of authorship to monopolize all his discipline and acquisitions. It is as fitting that the preacher should be characterized by a homiletical tendency, as that the poet should be characterized by a poetical tendency. If it is proper that the poet should transmute every thing that he touches, into poetry, it is proper that the preacher should transmute every thing that he touches, into sermon.

"This homiletical habit will appear in a disposition to skeletonize, to construct plans, to examine and criticize discourses with respect to their logical structure. The preacher's mind becomes habitually organific. It is inclined to build. Whenever leading thoughts are brought into the mind, they are straightway disposed and arranged into the unity of a plan, instead of being allowed to lie here and there, like scattered boulders on a field of drift. This homiletic habit will appear, again, in a disposition to render all the argumentative, and illustrative, materials which pour in upon the educated man, from the various fields of science, literature, and art, subservient to the purposes of preaching. The sermonizer is, or should be, a student, and an industrious one, a reader, and a thoughtful one. He will, consequently, in the course of his studies, meet with a great variety of information that may be advantageously employed in sermonizing, either as proof or illustration, provided he possesses the proper power to elaborate it, and work it up. Now, if he has acquired this homiletic mental habit, this tendency to sermonize, all this material, which would pass through another mind without assimilation, will be instantaneously and constantly taken up, and wrought into the substance and form of sermons." *

"The possession of such an intellectual habitude as this, greatly facilitates immediate preparation for the pulpit. It is, virtually, a primary preparation, from which the secondary and more direct preparation derives its precision, thoroughness, rapidity, and effectiveness. Without it, the preacher must be continually forced up to an unwelcome and ungenial task, in the preparation of discourses, instead of finding in this process of composition, a grateful vent for the outflow and overflow of his resources." †

These materials will of course be drawn from every source. No kind of knowledge can be utterly useless to a preacher, and reflection, upon whatever subjects, will always leave him something which may hereafter be

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* These materials will readily overflow, in the form of skeletons, metaphors, illustrations, &c., into the preacher's Commonplace Book (Shedd's note.)

† Shedd, Hom. p. 108.

turned to account. But it may be well to remark upon the principal sources from which materials for preaching are derived.

The *Scriptures* themselves should at every period of his life be a preacher's chief study. When we meet a young brother who has just become convinced that it is his duty to preach, and who is inquiring about preparation for the work, our first word ought to be, the Bible — not so much, at the outset, the profound study of doctrinal epistles or prophetical books, as the familiar and accurate knowledge of historical facts, the analysis of Biblical characters, the memorizing of devotional passages and of precepts, the acquisition of a general familiarity with the contents of particular books and of the entire sacred collection. Young ministers, even graduates of colleges, are often found sadly deficient as to this general knowledge of the Bible; while the best Sunday Schools, as well as the most admirable family instruction, have usually but laid the foundation for such knowledge as the preacher should make haste to gain. And every stage of culture and experience, as life goes on, presents fresh occasion and new facilities for studying the Bible. In the originals, if possible, in the English version at any rate;* by the rapid reading of large portions, by the thorough study of a given book, by the minute examination of particular passages, and sometimes even by looking at sentences here and there as we turn over the leaves; by reading in company with others, for discussion or for sympathy, by reading when alone with our beating hearts and our God; by adopting new methods for variety, and by steadily maintaining old methods till they become habitual; by reading when we enjoy it, as a pleasure, and when at the beginning we do not enjoy it, as a duty, — every way, and continually, let us keep up, freshen, extend our acquaintance with the precious Word of God. The study of Systematic Divinity will but prepare us better to appreciate the separate teachings of Scripture as they stand in their own connection. Every kind of knowledge we gain should lead to further examination of that which is for us the centre of all knowledge, and the various experiences of life should be constantly bringing us back to find new meaning, strength, and consolation in God's Word. And we must constantly beware lest we fall into the habit of reading the Bible only as a perfunctory matter, a professional duty. In the spirit of personal devoutness, with a desire for personal benefit, and with the constant prayer that God would bless us in learning and in teaching, let us study the Bible, that we may "both save ourselves, and them that hear us." *

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* Comp. above, chap. 2, § 2, 1.

Systematic Theology is of unspeakable importance to the preacher, indispensable if he would be in the best sense instructive, and exert an abiding influence over his hearers. This enables him to speak with the boldness of assured conviction, giving him a confidence in the great system of inspired truth which no minute criticism can shake. † This prepares him to urge one doctrine, or to unfold and apply one text, without the fear of offending against another — a fault into which many ministers are grieved to remember how often their early sermons fell. This renders it practicable to discuss particular aspects of a doctrine in different sermons, in such a way as by degrees to impart a good knowledge of the doctrine as a whole. And the manifest possession of a systematic acquaintance with revealed truth gives him authority with the people They readily listen to one who has definite, positive, and well-considered opinions; and no uninspired man, even of the highest genius, has a right to be so authoritative in his utterances upon moral and spiritual truth, as a preacher of humble powers, who speaks from a thorough and systematic study of God's Word.* Exegesis and Systematic Theology properly go hand in hand. Neither is complete, neither is really safe, without the other. And while a man will be apt to feel himself specially attracted towards one of them, according to his mental constitution and training, and will naturally work extensively at that one, he ought also diligently, regularly, and through life, to pursue the other. A preacher ought almost always to have on hand some able treatise of Theology, new or old, which he is regularly studying, or some particular topic of Divinity, which he makes the subject of much reading and reflection.

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* Alexander has some admirable thoughts and suggestions on the study of the Bible, especially for ministers of middle age, and of considerable attainments, in Thoughts on Preaching, p. 56–60, and p 464–6.

† An eminent English Bishop, and leading writer on Exegesis, states in a private letter his persuasion that the study of Systematic Theology would have prevented much of that semi-skepticism which is now painfully common among the clergy of the Church of England.

Of other reading, regarded as an important source of materials for preaching, there can be only brief mention. Church History does not usually receive from working ministers the attention it deserves. Especially does the history of Doctrines assist one in understanding the truth, and in comprehending those objections and erroneous tendencies which under different forms reproduce themselves in every age. Every religious denomination has certain characteristic or favorite doctrines, which its standard works bring out with clearness and prominence; so that apart from the necessary provision for polemical preaching, and from the common stock of Christian Theology, there is much to be learned by studying the peculiar opinions of different denominations. Ethical Philosophy furnishes a rich store of materials for those who can really master its discussions, and adapt their results to the conditions of practical preaching; and there are some works, such as Butler's Analogy and McCosh on the Divine Government, occupying a sort of border ground between Ethics and Theology, which are unsurpassed in value. Some ministers are "too metaphysical" in their preaching, but very many are not metaphysical enough in their *studies.** The study of Sermons is not only very useful with reference to the art of sermonizing, but affords much valuable material, provided it be not borrowed directly, but assimilated by reflection and made part of one's own thinking. The careful analysis and thorough and repeated examination of a few rich and impressive sermons, is much better, in every respect, than the cursory reading of many.

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* Comp. Shedd, Hom. p. 26 ff

And so as to all our reading. Young men who have enjoyed but limited opportunities of culture, and have never looked out with eager eyes upon the great world of books, sometimes need to be urged to read more widely; but in the immense majority of cases, very different advice is required. He who would become really a man must abandon as early as possible the childish dream of reading everything. Except what is done for recreation — and excessive recreation is destruction — he must have a limited field of study, and must cultivate that field with the utmost possible thoroughness. And upon every subject studied, he must find out the best books, and restrict himself almost entirely to those. If the men of true scholarship and real power were called on to give one counsel to young students, in this age of multiplied books, they would probably all unite in saying, Read only the best works of the great authors, and so read these as to make them thoroughly and permanently your own.*

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* "Read Butler, and preach to the negroes," was the advice given to a young preacher, twenty years ago, by a judicious senior

Whether it is better to make extracts, summaries, and references in a Commonplace Book, or to rely mainly on memory in reading, will depend on a man's turn of mind and general habits, and on the kind of reading in question. Even a man of extraordinary memory can hardly dispense with memoranda in reading books of information; while books of thought, though they may be profitably analyzed in writing, should be thought over, thought through and through, and then all that is cognate to our own thinking will be retained without difficulty. As regards whatever is not matter of pure thought, an important part of the benefit derived from reading is this, that one will always know where to look for what he wants; and this can be best accomplished by a system of references, etc., unless the power of local memory is found, upon fair trial, to suffice for the purpose. Whichever method one adopts, he must strive to make the best of it, guarding carefully against its disadvantages and dangers.

But there are other sources of materials for preaching, besides books.† A preacher's knowledge of human nature, and knowledge of the world, his experience of life, and especially of the religious life, his conversation with those around him upon religious and upon general themes, his perpetual reflection upon everything felt, observed, or heard—these afford a large part of his most valuable materials. And all his previous preaching, if rightly managed, has but enriched the mind to meet further demands. If one merely scrapes together thoughts around a subject, so as to make a sermon, then every sermon consumes part of his material, and leaves him poorer. But if he habitually penetrates into a subject and masters it, every sermon leaves him richer; not that he can shortly preach again upon the same topic or text, but that he is better prepared for treating others akin to it. There is a fertilizing production. In this sense too, "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth."

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* Comp. Shedd, Hom. p. 121–4.

† Upon sources of Illustration, see remarks below, chap. 7.

§ 2. MATERIALS PROVIDED AT THE TIME.

These embrace the interpretation of the text, and the choice of a subject, which we have already considered. The precise mode of stating a subject can in many cases not be fixed until after we have wrought out much of the general materials for the treatment of it. Besides interpreting the text, in the strict sense of the phrase, much may be derived from reflecting on it, and on its connection. If the treatment be textual or expository, a large part of the materials will be derived from this study of the text; if it be a subject-sermon, still the text and its context may furnish much that will be useful in the discussion of the topic. Then fixing the mind upon the subject, or in succession upon the several related subjects furnished by the textual or expository method, the preacher must attempt the complete analysis and copious development of the matters involved, and the collection of all associated matters which are likely to be useful.

Kidder gives some good "practical suggestions in reference to invention, in the form of rules:

"1. Address your mind to the invention of thoughts, not words. Words may be employed, but only as auxiliaries.

"2. Note down or otherwise make sure of whatever relevant thoughts your mind can call to its aid, irrespective of order or mainly so.

"3. At first be not too scrupulous on the subject of relevancy. Entertain whatever seemingly good thoughts come at your call. Try them, push them out to conclusions.

Perhaps if not available themselves they will lead to others that are.

"4. Pursue invention in every variety of circumstance, in the study and out of it. Make it the subject of special and protracted occupation, and also of occasional attention, when walking or riding, when taking exercise or rest. One's very dreams at night may often be made serviceable for this object.

"5. Make an early selection of subjects in order to secure the advantages of the repeated and incidental action of the inventive powers. [He means, early in the week. This course was pursued and recommended by Robert Hall.]

"6. Use former studies and preparations as helps to invention rather than as substitutes for it.

"Invention as thus practised will always strengthen but never exhaust itself. It will become a most delightful exercise, causing the mind to glow with rapture at its new creations and combinations." *

The important part which Imagination plays in the invention of materials will be noticed in a subsequent chapter; † and the reaction of *arrangement* upon invention will attract our attention in discussing that subject. ‡ The question how far and in what ways we may properly employ commentaries, sermons upon the same text, etc., in preparing a sermon, will be examined presently. ||

§ 3. ORIGINAL MATERIALS.

Whether the materials are possessed beforehand, or provided at the time of preparation, it is obvious that they might be original, or borrowed. Under this latter division they will now be considered.

1. Originality may be *absolute*, or *relative*. By the for-

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* Kidder, Hom. p. 152.

† Part III, chap 5.

‡ Part II, chap. 1.

|| See § 4 of the present chapter

mer is meant bringing into existence thoughts which the world never knew before, which had never arisen in any human mind. Of course this must be very rare. In the physical world, new facts are now constantly ascertained, and new mechanical contrivances invented. But in the world of ideas, it is very difficult to be absolutely original.* "The ancients have stolen all our best ideas," is one of the sayings of the great Edinburgh Reviewer which cannot soon be forgotten. And not in modern times alone has this been felt. Hear Chaucer:

> "For out of the old fieldes, as men saithe,
> Cometh al this new corne fro yere to yere,
> And out of old bookes, in good faithe,
> Cometh al this new science that men lere."

And Confucius, six centuries before our era, proclaimed himself only a student of antiquity. Yet even in this absolute sense, originality is possible, and we should not despair. Progress in some directions the world's thought does slowly make. Among all the uncounted millions of men, patient thinkers are far from numerous; and he who will patiently think, why may he not light upon some thought unknown to those who have gone before him?

But *relatively*, any man may be original, and to some extent every man is so. We produce thoughts which were not by us derived from any other mind, though other minds, at the time unknown to us, have also produced them. The same phases of nature and experiences of life awaken in us the same reflections they have awakened in many others; and seed-thoughts attain in us the same developments. Here there is everything to encourage. Much of the mental quickening, the conscious vigor, and buoyant self-reliance, which result from absolute originality, may also be wrought in us by thoughts relatively original. Of course the mental elation will not be so great, where we know that others must have had the same thought. In fact, some of the most marvellous self-conceit is to be observed in certain very ignorant men, who mistake their relative originality for absolute; thoughts having occurred to them which neither they nor their ignorant neighbors had heard of, are supposed to be equally new to all the world.

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* Shedd, Hom. p. 8, makes it impossible, but he uses the word absolute in a different sense.

Now the basis of preaching cannot be original, because it must come from Scripture. But the preacher may be original, in several ways. He may have original views of the meaning of Scripture. It is entirely possible that any one of us should attain more just conceptions of the meaning of some passage, or certain aspects of a doctrine, than have ever before been gained. And to interpret and ponder for ourselves, in the sense of relative originality, is the privilege and the duty of all. We have no right to take for granted that commentators and theologians are correct in their opinions; and in fact theological discords and conflicts, with all their evils, have this advantage, that they compel the most trusting and the most slothful of us somewhat to feel the necessity of thinking for ourselves. What freshness, what power there is, in truths which the preacher has himself wrought out from Scripture, drawing with his own bucket, as Lord Bacon says, "immediately where it springeth." The student of physical science must observe nature for himself; and so in Theology, we must open our own eyes to behold and contemplate the teachings of God's Word. There is no limit to the relative originality which may in this respect be achieved. Again, the combination of Scripture teachings with the facts and truths which we derive from nature, providence, human nature, life, affords large room for originality. Here in every direction the mind may expatiate, bringing all things into relation to the Word of God. And then in the choice of topics, the construction of discourse, the illustration and application of truth, a preacher may perpetually devise what shall be in some respects fresh, and relatively to him, original.

Originality is sometimes aimed at in unworthy ways, or made matter of affectation. Men of a certain character will take up with some *heresy*, merely to display independence, to show that they, forsooth, are not tied down to the old opinions. *Paradox* may be properly employed, as it is by some able teachers and preachers, as it was by our Lord himself, to awaken attention to truth; but there are those who deal in the paradoxical as showing originality. *Oddity*, in ideas, expressions, or manner, is a mere caricature of originality. To say that such and such a preacher is "an original," is to use the term in a very degraded sense. Young men, and even older ones, sometimes pretend not to read, lest it should impair their originality. "We have seen the works of a painter, who would see no Raffaelles or Van Dycks, lest he should spoil his native manner. He has certainly succeeded in avoiding all that one beholds in these great masters."*

2. Why is originality so desirable? We may answer, first, that independent thinking, more than anything else, will develop, discipline and strengthen the mind. In the matter of mental improvement, it must never be forgotten, the hardest way is the easiest way, the slow way the swiftest. So far as a man's health and vigor is concerned, a week's quiet walking is worth much more than a week's travel on the cars, though the latter should carry him thousands of miles. If it be possible, let us persuade ourselves to much of independent and patient thinking, otherwise we shall never be men.

Again, remember that originality renders discourse greatly more attractive and impressive. On the one hand, an original thought interests the speaker more. It is his offspring; it awakens in him a parental affection, and perhaps a thrill of parental pride. It is his possession; he is no dispenser now of other men's bounty, but gives of his own; and in knowledge as elsewhere, "to give is happier than to receive." But no analogies will do justice to the feeling — the pleasure, the confidence, the hopefulness and earnestness, with which a man utters what is even relatively original. On the other hand, it interests the audience more. As simply new, it gratifies their natural love of novelty. If they consider the thought original with the speaker, there arises a heightened admiration of him, and a higher regard for all that he says. And then they sympathize with the speaker's own feeling. Whatever makes his mind glow will warm theirs. In general, no man can interest others, save by that which exceedingly interests himself. Thus the two causes combine. And no doubt there are other causes. Analysis cannot fully reach the secret of that delight with which we regard what comes as a new creation, a fresh existence. But even a little reflection should make us feel more deeply the importance of original thinking.

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* Alexander, Thoughts on Preaching, p. 362.

It is an obvious inference that we ought to think out for ourselves the most familiar topics, and exhibit them in our own manner. In discoursing upon matters so commonplace as the pleasures of piety, or the danger of delay, one should strive, by long and earnest reflection, to gain views of the subject, or a method of presenting it, which will be his own. Happy the preacher who can thus give to momentous but too familiar themes some heightened interest, some new impressiveness. Yet the warning must here be repeated: mere oddity is a very different thing from originality, and it is better to be commonplace but in earnest, than to be manifestly straining after novelty.

Another inference is, that even ideas which have been borrowed, ought to be so thoroughly thought over as to become a part of our own thinking. Otherwise they will commonly fail to take a firm hold of ourselves or of the hearers. As a government often takes foreign coins and passes them through its own mint, so the thoughts derived from others should receive the stamp of our own minds, which will give them newness of aspect, full value, and ready acceptance.

3. Obstacles to originality. These are numerous and powerful, as might be taken for granted when we remember how desirable it is, and yet how rarely it is found in any high degree.

Erroneous views of the nature of originality prevent many persons from attaining it. Some imagine that there can be nothing worth the name, unless it be *absolutely* original, new to the human race; and as this can of course be very seldom achieved, they despair, and content themselves too commonly with taking ideas at second hand. But, as we have seen, relative originality of a very high order may exist, where there is little or nothing of absolute addition to the stock of human knowledge, and may greatly augment a man's power. Some refrain from reading as a means of promoting originality, and thus condemn themselves to great mental barrenness. It would be as wise to avoid conversation. Who does not know the quickening, fructifying power of talk with an intelligent friend upon a subject we have been studying? Though nothing be directly borrowed, yet new thoughts are often *suggested*, and we are led to see more clearly what we had but dimly perceived. The same effect may be produced by reading. In general, we ought vigorously and patiently to think upon the subject before either reading or conversing upon it; otherwise, the mind is in danger of merely following the track which others have marked out, instead of approaching the subject in its own manner. But after such personal reflection, then reading and conversation may be found highly stimulating and suggestive, leading to much that is really our own, but which but for this contact with other minds would not have occurred to us. A third class, by mistaking oddity or eccentricity for originality, misdirect and pervert their aspirations and powers, and not only fail to accomplish what they might have done, but prejudice many, who make the same mistake, against the idea of trying to be original. And still another error is seen in the fact that credit for originality is so often wrongly assigned. Some men really think profoundly, and develop views thoroughly their own, but as they state them with great clearness and simplicity, the masses think that anybody might have said that, and that they themselves always knew it. Others, by holding up dim, formless phantoms of thought, by using obscure, but high-wrought, peculiar, and impassioned language, are regarded as wonderfully original, when if their ideas were brought out in a clear light they would appear to be either nothing at all, or something very familiar. Thus it happens that aspiring young minds, setting out in pursuit of originality, are sometimes led to seek it in affectations of style, rather than in genuine, clear thinking.*

It may be said that no persons capable of much originality would fall into such errors as these; but not only do they diminish the amount of original thinking in multitudes, but they have also much effect upon some men of considerable powers.

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* Archbishop Whately was fond of comparing this would-be original style to the case of Dean Swift's antiquary, who had found a Roman shield with some very curious and almost legible inscriptions, which he invited a party of friends to help him decipher; but the cook having taken a notion to scour off the rust, it turned out to be an old pot-lid

✓ A second hindrance is found in native indolence. Original thinking is difficult, laborious, and usually slow, the hardest work that men ever attempt. Who can wonder that easy borrowing, or even shameless stealing, is so often substituted?

A third obstacle, especially at the present day, is the vast extension of literature, and the attractive forms which new books and periodicals assume, seducing us by their charm, or imposing on us unreal claims to our acquaintance. Reading accompanied by honest thinking, is promotive of originality; but we are tempted to waste ourselves upon a species of reading which does not demand reflection, nor leave time for it. One who is inclined to free indulgence in light literature, must curb himself with very steady hand, or he will never achieve much as a thinker, nor be in any respect worth much to the world. Even of books upon religious subjects, very many of the most attractive that appear, are by no means so stimulating, so provocative of good thinking, as the older books from which they were mainly drawn.

And the character of the age is in many respects unfavorable to profound thought. The demand is for quick processes, and so-called "practical" results. "Knowledge made easy" is the rage. The inevitable result is a grievous tendency to superficiality among the people, and in their instructors to the display of prodigiously extensive and varied superficial attainments. Teachers are tempted to substitute readiness, variety, boundless surface-knowledge, with brilliancy, and point and paradox, for deep thinking, and thorough acquaintance with a few subjects. We must constantly remind ourselves that real knowledge has three dimensions, length, breadth and depth. Our acquisitions in that noble domain should not be confined to the surface of things, but should correspond to the old law as to the tenure of land, by which possession extends up to the sky, and down to the centre of the earth. Such knowledge is the handmaid, nay, the sister of original thought.*

Two remarks may be made here in conclusion. One is, that the preacher should not desire to originate any part of the fundamental material of his preaching. He should not only submit, but rejoice, to take this from the Word of God. Too many preachers are in these days seeking after originality, and other novelty, by forsaking the Scriptures. The other remark is, that we must not aspire after originality in the spirit of pride or selfish ambition, but as a means of doing more to benefit men, and to glorify the Redeemer.

§ 4. BORROWED MATERIALS AND PLAGIARISM.

A plagiary, among the Romans, was a kidnapper, one who stole free men and made slaves of them. A late Roman writer, by a natural analogy, applies the odious name to one guilty of literary theft, stealing a man's ideas; and the languages derived from Latin retain the word in this sense. Plagiarism has from the earliest times been censured and satirized, and no man defends it, any more than other stealing would be defended.† But then what is plagiarism, and what is lawful borrowing? Some practise the former who design only the latter, and some, through morbid dread of that which is disgraceful, shrink from what is innocent and helpful. There are two questions to be considered, the proper use of other men's thoughts, and the proper acknowledgment of such use.

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* Some of these obstacles are mentioned in the Christian Review for 1842, p. 142 ff.

† Chrysostom, in his beautiful treatise on the Priesthood (§ 451), makes a slightly humorous complaint as to the charges of plagiarism made against preachers, sometimes even for repeating something of their own.

1. What *use* is it proper to make, in preparing a sermon, of ideas derived from others? The question is in principle the same, as regards what we have read, and what we have heard; though many persons use with great freedom what they have heard, in the pulpit, the lecture-room, or in conversation, who are much more strict as to the fruits of reading. But in another respect the inquiry, as a practical one for him who is about to prepare a sermon, divides again.

(1.) What use shall be made of that which we have *previously* learned?

Never appropriate an entire discourse, whether with or without acknowledgment. It might be lawful, under peculiar circumstances, to read to an audience some choice sermon, avowedly as reading; as an occasional exercise, by a good reader, and with a congregation who fancy it, this might do good. Such was in fact the idea which Addison recommended in the oft-quoted humorous account of Sir Roger de Coverley's chaplain — just reading a sermon as one might read a poem; and enjoying it in much the same way.

"'At his first settling with me, I made him a present of all the good sermons which have been printed in English, and only begged of him that every Sunday he would pronounce one of them in the pulpit. Accordingly, he has digested them into such a series, and they follow one another naturally, and make a continued system of practical divinity.'

"As Sir Roger was going on in his story, the gentleman we were talking of came up to us; and upon the knight's asking him who preached to-morrow (for it was Saturday night), told us, the Bishop of St. Asaph in the morning, and Dr. South in the afternoon. He then showed us his list of preachers for the whole year; where I saw with a great deal of pleasure Archbishop Tillotson, Bishop Sanderson, Dr. Barrow, Dr. Calamy, with several living authors

> who have published discourses of practical divinity. I no sooner saw this venerable man in the pulpit, but I very much approved of my friend's insisting upon the qualifications of a good aspect and a clear voice; for I was so charmed with the gracefulness of his figure and delivery, as well as with the discourses he pronounced, that I think I never passed any time more to my satisfaction. A sermon repeated after this manner, is like the composition of a poet in the mouth of a graceful actor." *

But to preach, as preaching, a discourse which we acknowledge to have been borrowed from others, is so incongruous and unpleasing a thing, as to be very rarely done. The real practice, with some preachers, is still worse. They shrink from acknowledging what they do, but still allow themselves to do it. In England, this is well known to be very common. It is wonderful how those who boast of being gentlemen, can practise an appropriation which is condemned by the guilty pains they take to hide it. And such a usage on the part of those who profess to be Christians, could never have arisen save in connection with radically wrong ideas as to the very nature of preaching.

Never appropriate the complete outline of a discourse. Many persons in our country appear to think this perfectly lawful. Ludicrous stories are often told of sermons pursuing the same train of thought with one shortly before preached at the same place; and sometimes the real author incurs the blame. But one rebukes himself for being amused at such stories, for they have a grave side, which is humiliating. Does the evil of stealing depend on whether one is caught at it, as the Spartans taught their boys? Shall a Christian minister, in the very performance of his solemn duties, deliberately do what he would be ashamed to confess? Let any one try the experiment, if he likes, of acknowledging that the plan of his sermon is derived from so and so, and see to what an extent, save in very peculiar cases, it will diminish the interest. The people do not merely come to hear a discourse—they come to hear a living man, communicating to them his earnest thought and feeling; and if the principal ideas of the sermon are from another preacher, they regard themselves as only hearing a dead man. If then it would be bad policy to proclaim the borrowing, how can it be honesty to conceal it? The power of custom, including the known practice of some good men, the seductions of sloth, and the overwork to which ministers are often subjected, have wrought in many minds a confusion of ideas on this subject, which can alone account for the frequent cases of unacknowledged appropriation.

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* Spectator, No. 106.

The books of "Sketches and Skeletons," which are so often published and so widely bought, are an unmitigated evil, and a disgrace to the ministry of the gospel. If it be said that they may be profitably studied as specimens of sermonizing, there is the obvious answer that it would be much more profitable to analyze for ourselves the full sermons of really great men. There is no excuse for such books, and no minister should suffer one of them to remain in his library. But they are deplorably common in this country, and still more so in Germany.* Nor is the practice of recent origin. As early as 1517, there appeared in Paris a Latin volume of this character, entitled "The Preacher's Gem," and styling itself "a most excellent and divine work." And at Amsterdam in 1642, appeared, "*Dormi secure: vel Cynosura professorum ac studiosorum eloquentiæ," etc.* (Sleep without anxiety: or, The Cynosure of professors and students of eloquence, etc.) The idea appears to be that one who possesses this book need not have his sleep disturbed by anxiety about next Sunday's sermon. Coquerel, who mentions these two works, remarks that it may be doubted whether persons would awake from this sleep to be eloquent;* and we may add that one who has determined to borrow a plan from such a book should be too much ashamed of himself to sleep at all.†

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* The "Homiletical" Notes in the good Commentaries of Lange are too much of this character, and should be used only with great reserve and caution.

But while refusing to appropriate a discourse, or the outline of one, we may with perfect propriety employ among the general materials of a discourse thoughts previously read or heard, provided we use them in a proper manner, and with suitable acknowledgment; and these conditions will be discussed presently.

(2.) After selecting the text and subject, shall we read about it?

If the text is not perfectly plain, in itself and the context, one certainly ought, at an early period of his preparation, to consult the best *explanatory* commentaries, for help in understanding it.

Other books, such as theological treatises, sermons on the same text or on similar topics, commentaries in the strict sense (those which do not so much explain a text, as enlarge upon its teachings, e. g. Matthew Henry), etc., may be read with great profit, though we do not borrow anything from them, because they will help to fix the mind on the subject, and often *suggest* thoughts, which will be truly our own, and yet would not have occurred to us but for the reading. ‡

But may we borrow? Certainly, we *may*, and sometimes *ought to* borrow. There are two extremes. On the one hand, a mistaken desire for originality and independence causes some able men to abstain from reading anything on the text or subject. Such a man deceives himself, for many of the thoughts which his own mind now furnishes were originally derived from reading or hearing. True, these are more likely to have been digested and assimilated than what is read just at the time of preparation. But this difference does not necessarily hold, for many thoughts are long retained by the memory in a perfectly crude state, and what results from reading at the time should not be used until after thoroughly working it over in our own mind. And besides this self-deception, he deprives himself of what would often prove valuable help in contemplating the subject on every side, and presenting it in the most effective manner. The other extreme is that of reading *instead of* thinking, just cramming the mind with a medley of other men's thoughts, and constructing a discourse out of these. Such a method of preparation, though often adopted, is exceedingly objectionable. But can we avoid the latter extreme only by rushing to the former?

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* Coquerel, Observ. sur la Prédication, p. 204. On the subject of "Skeletons," see vigorous remarks in Shedd, Hom. p. 116–122.

† It is by no means designed to cast unmerited reproach upon some excellent ministers who have used these books from the force of example, without ever sufficiently reflecting upon the general impropriety of the practice.

‡ Comp. above, § 3.

There is surely a middle course. We may both think, and read. On most texts and subjects, think long and laboriously before reading at all (except it be the commentaries as to the meaning of the text). Put down in writing some statement of your principal thoughts, and make out the plan of the discourse. Afterwards, read whatever bears upon the subject, as far as you have time, or see occasion, and in reading, think for yourself still, not only weighing carefully what the author says, but following out any trains of thought which he may suggest to your own mind. On some subjects, concerning which we lack *information*, it may be well to read widely before constructing the plan of the sermon. But one will not often determine to preach upon a subject, until he has gained some general knowledge of it. And now if we have found an idea, or remember one formerly met with, which can be easily wrought into our plan of discourse, and which would make the sermon more instructive, interesting or impressive, why, let us use it — of course with proper acknowledgment. Not only may minor ideas, illustrations, etc., be borrowed, but in rare cases even one head of the discourse, the other heads being our own. The question is, which will be best, on the one hand for your general improvement as a preacher, and on the other for the effectiveness of the present sermon, that you should use this idea, or should omit it.

Everything thus borrowed must have been fully comprehended, and must take its place naturally as a part of the discourse. A discourse is a structure, and extraneous matters which do not fit into it and subserve its objects, will, however admirable in themselves, be offensive and hurtful, as would be such additions to a dwelling-house or a steam-engine.

2. In what cases, and in what ways, shall one make *acknowledgment* of having borrowed?

When the remark is obvious, or belongs to the common stock of religious ideas, so that it might have occurred to ourselves, although it happens to have been drawn from another, then it is often unnecessary to make any acknowledgment. When the idea is at all striking, so that hearers would give any special credit for it as a good thing, then we must not take a credit which is undeserved, but must *in some way* indicate that the thought was derived from another.

In what cases shall we mention the precise source? When the author's name would give greater weight to the idea, or in some way attach interest to it; e. g. Bacon or Bunyan, Whitefield or Spurgeon. Again, when we may hope thereby to lead some hearer to read the book mentioned. Or generally, when to name the source would do any good. It is well to be sure that one can pronounce the author's name correctly, or else to omit it. Many French and German names occur in our religious literature, and many hearers know enough of those languages to make the effect quite bad, if the preacher ludicrously mispronounces them.

Otherwise it is enough merely to *indicate* that the thought was derived from some source. Avoid a parade of honesty about acknowledging. Avoid, too, an ostentatious display of wide reading. Let the acknowledgment interrupt as little as possible the flow of thought—detract as little as possible from the interest which the idea is calculated to awaken. If it would decidedly interrupt or detract, then omit the acknowledgment,—and the thing borrowed. In general, the method of acknowledging calls for the exercise of judgment, and good taste. Without formality or set phrases, and with graceful simplicity, state, indicate, or even merely intimate, that the idea was derived from some other person.

It is certainly important that on the whole subject of borrowing, one should have just principles; and that he should early in life establish such principles, and form correct habits from the beginning. Otherwise, there will either be a wrong practice continued through life, with very injurious results to a man's character and influence, or, when he comes to see more clearly, there will be much to regret in his past course.

CHAPTER V.

SPECIAL MATERIALS — EXPLANATION.

§ 1. Explanation of Texts, including Exegesis, Narration, and Description. § 2. Explanation of Subjects, including Definition, Division, Exemplification, Comparison.

THE materials of preaching are obviously boundless. To collect in general, by observation, reading and reflection, and then to select and adapt to the design of each particular discourse, is the preacher's great task. And not only the character of the materials, but the method of handling them, must vary indefinitely, according to the design of the sermon. But certain special classes of materials are of such importance, and their proper treatment of such difficulty, as to justify a separate discussion. The classes here selected for that purpose, and treated in successive chapters, are the materials of Explanation, of Proof, of Illustration, and of Application. This is not presented as a scientific classification of materials. It by no means embraces all, and its departments sometimes overlap. Thus illustration may be employed to explain, to prove, or to impress; application may embrace explanation, proof, and persuasion; and certain processes which are always classed under explanation, as narration and description, are often used at the same time, and even mainly, for other than explanatory ends. But it is thought that a scientific classification would here be less useful than the practical discussion of certain leading objects according to which the preacher must invent and handle his materials.*

There is in preaching very frequent need of Explanation. Numerous passages of Scripture are not understood, or are even misunderstood, by our hearers; and many have become so accustomed to passing over these, as to be no longer aware that they present any difficulty. Some of the most important doctrines of the Bible are in general very imperfectly understood; those who receive them need clearer views of what they profess to believe, and those who object to them are often in fact objecting to something very different from the real doctrine. The plan of salvation is seldom comprehended till one is really willing to conform to it, so that there is constantly arising new occasion for answering the great question, "What must I do to be saved?" And a thousand questions as to what is true and what is right in the practical conduct of life, perplex devout minds, and call for explanation. Preaching ought to be not merely convincing and persuasive, but eminently instructive. We often belabor men with arguments and appeals, when they are much more in need of practical and simple explanations, as regards what to do, and how to do it. And while some persons present may have repeatedly heard us explain certain important matters, we must not forget that there are others, children growing up, strangers moving in, converts entering the church, to whom such explanations will be new, and are in the highest degree necessary.

But just here the inexperienced minister may profit by several homely cautions. Do not attempt to explain *what is not assuredly true.* One sometimes finds great difficulty in working out an explanation of a supposed fact or principle, because it is really not true. Do not undertake to explain *what you do not understand.* Oh the insufferable weariness of listening to a man who does this! And in preaching as well as elsewhere, it happens so often as to be ridiculous, if it were not mournful. How can the housewife cook what has never been caught? How can the preacher explain what he does not understand? Never try to explain *what cannot be explained.* Some things taught in the Bible are in their essence incomprehensible; as, for example, the nature of the Trinity, or the coexistence of absolute Divine predestination with human freedom and accountability. In such a case it is very important to explain just what the Scriptures really do teach, so as to remove misapprehensions; and it may sometimes be worth while to present any remote analogies in other spheres of existence, so as perhaps to diminish the hearer's unwillingness to receive the doctrine; but attempts to explain the essential difficulty must necessarily fail, and the failure will react so as only to strengthen doubt and opposition. Do not waste time in explaining *what does not need explanation.*[*] A conspicuous instance is the nature of faith. Men frequently complain that they do not understand what it really is to believe, and preachers are constantly laboring to explain. But the complaint is in many cases a mere excuse for rejection or delay, and the real difficulty is in all cases a lack of disposition to believe. Elaborate explanations do not lessen this indisposition, do but strengthen the supposed excuse, and may even embarrass the anxious inquirer with the notion that there is something very mysterious about faith, when it is in fact so simple as not to admit of being explained. Our main duty is to tell the people what to believe, and why they should believe it.

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* A full and in general valuable discussion of Invention may be found in Day's Art of Discourse, p. 42–207. He classifies materials according to the four objects of *explanation*, *confirmation*, *excitation*, and *persuasion*. His treatment of Explanation is the most elaborate in existence (p. 57–111), and although too formal in some respects, it will be found instructive and suggestive. See also Vinet, p. 153–169

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[*] Comp. Vinet, Hom. p. 166

§ 1. EXPLANATION OF TEXTS.

To explain the Scriptures would seem to be among the primary functions of the preacher.* And there will often be occasion to explain, not merely the text of the sermon but various other passages of Scripture which may be introduced into the discussion. The power of making such explanations attractive as well as clear, will of course depend largely upon the preacher's turn of mind. But the most gifted in respect of this important task should seek constant improvement, and they who have great difficulty must put forth diligent and hopeful efforts to overcome it. What nobler work than that of "opening" the Scriptures, as Paul did at Thessalonica? (Acts 17 : 3.)

The EXEGESIS of texts, as the process by which the preacher himself comes to understand them, has already received our attention.† Pulpit exegesis, or exposition, is in certain respects a different thing. We have here, save in exceptional cases, to present results and not processes. We must omit various matters, which have perhaps greatly interested ourselves, because they would not interest the people, or do not pertain to the object of the present discourse. Preachers sometimes allow themselves, in the introduction to the sermon or as a digression, to give long explanations of something in a passage or its connection, which has no bearing on their subject, and thus impairs unity, and distracts attention. There must of course be no parade of acquaintance with the original languages, and there should be no morbid fear of being charged with such parade. Commentaries may be mentioned if the people know something of them, and would thereby be more readily satisfied, or if it is desirable to bring good popular authors to their notice. To repeat lists of strange and high-sounding names in favor of this or that interpretation, is always useless, and is in general a very pitiful display of cheap erudition, which with the help of certain books may all be gotten up at second hand in a few minutes. One may very easily indicate, without any array of authorities, that this is the view of the best writers, of some good commentators, etc. The great matter is, to take the results of the most careful investigation in our power, select from them such points as are appropriate, and present these clearly, briefly, and if possible in such a way as to be interesting. Sometimes the text, or another passage introduced, may be amply and admirably explained by a few words; but such words do not come of themselves — they result from close thinking, and careful choice of expressions. Sometimes passages may be introduced in such a connection, as without a word of explanation to give them new meaning and preciousness. It is a fault in many able ministers, that they comparatively neglect to bring in and explain the apposite sayings of Scripture which would both give and borrow light. And however congregations may shrink from elaborate exegesis or bungling and tedious attempts to explain, they will always welcome the felicitous introduction, and quick, vivid elucidation of passages from God's Word.

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*Comp. on Expos. Sermons, Part II. chap 3.

† Above, chap. 2.

NARRATION has in preaching a peculiar character. Recent works on Rhetoric treat of it almost exclusively as practised in historical writing and the like.* Ancient writers treat of oratorical narration, and are therefore more valuable for our purpose,† though relating chiefly to the narrative in judicial oratory. The preacher of course narrates as a speaker, and deals mainly with Scripture history. A speaker must always subordinate narration to the object of his discourse, the conviction or persuasion which he wishes to effect.* He must not elaborate or enlarge upon some narrative merely because in itself interesting, nor follow the story step by step, according to its own laws. "In demonstrative speeches the narration is not continuous, but given in scattered portions; for one must go over the actions out of which the speech arises; for a speech is a kind of compound, having one portion, indeed, independent of art, and another portion originating in art." That is, the facts are independent of the speaker, but he breaks them up and presents them according to his object. "Owing to this, there are times when one ought not to narrate every fact successively; because this mode of exposition is difficult to remember. The one style of narration is too simple; the other has the grace of variety, and is not so void of elegance. But what you have to do is to awaken the recollection of facts well known; on which account many subjects will stand in no need of narration —supposing, for instance, you would praise Achilles, because all are acquainted with his actions—but you must simply use the actions without narration. If, on the other hand, one wishes to praise Critias, it is necessary to narrate; for not many are acquainted with his exploits." †

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* Thus Day's Art of Discourse, and Bain's Rhetoric, each of which contains a good discussion from that point of view.

† Particularly Arist. Rhet. III, 16, and Quintil. IV, 2, which will be found very suggestive.

And so when we preach with reference to the minor and less familiar personages of Scripture, it is proper enough to narrate all the facts concerning them. But when it is one of the great characters we must choose between two courses. We may select the salient or characteristic points of his history, and so narrate these as to exhibit the chief lessons of that history, introducing such details as are to the purpose, and rigorously omitting all others. Thus the history of Joseph, of Job, of John the Baptist, may be conveniently treated. In such a case, every speaker will mention or enlarge upon different parts of the history, according to his particular object; as Stephen's speech, and that of Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, sketch very differently the history of Israel; and as Paul in the two speeches which tell the story of his conversion, expands in each of them certain matters which in the other are but slightly touched, adapting the narration to the character and wants of his audience.* But it is generally better to choose some one event of the man's history, or some one trait of his character, and narrate only what bears upon that. In preaching upon the *meekness* of Moses, there would be occasion to state briefly those circumstances of his training and career which were particularly unfavorable to the development of meekness, and then to narrate, with vivid touches, the leading instances in which his meekness was exhibited, as well as those in which it temporarily failed; and the discourse would properly close with a somewhat extended application of the whole matter to ourselves. In this way the history of Moses would be much more impressively reproduced, than if one should attempt an outline of the whole.

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* Narratio est rei factæ . . . . . *utilis ad persuadendum* expositio Quintil. IV, 2, 31.

† Arist. Rhet. III, 16, 1–3.

Narration is usually given in the introduction to the sermon. In so doing special pains should be taken not to have it too long, not to wander into parts of the story which have no bearing upon the design of the discourse, and not to pause, except in very rare cases, for remarks upon outside topics which the narrative may suggest. There is especial danger here of violating the laws of unity and proportion.

Besides the instances in which some history in the Bible is our *theme*, there will be constant occasion to derive *illustration* from Scripture history, and great demand for skill in the brief and interesting narration of events thus employed. Happy the preacher who can in this way keep ever fresh in the minds of his hearers those beautiful and sacred stories, which are not only sweet to the heart of childhood and full of instruction to youth, but which, when rightly contemplated, assume new interest and meaning at every stage of life.

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* Comp. Acts, chap. 7 with chap. 13, and chap. 22 with chap. 26.

It is a rather common fault in the pulpit to narrate in a *declamatory* way. The preacher has become excited, and he states a plain fact, or tells a simple story, with such vehemence and boisterousness as to be extremely incongruous. Quintilian keenly satirizes those who think it beneath their dignity to set forth facts in every-day language, who do not seem to themselves eloquent, unless they have thrown everything into agitation by boisterous vociferation, and instead of simply narrating, imagine that they have here a field for showing off, and "inflect the voice, set back the neck, and fling the arm against the side, and riot in every variety of ideas, words, and style." * Let us learn the lesson.†

Description is usually a necessary part of narration, separate scenes of the narrative being to some extent described. There is also frequent occasion to describe Scripture scenes apart from their connection in the narrative, as in the introduction to a sermon, in the employment of historical illustrations from Scripture, etc. And while we speak here of narration and description only as regards the events and scenes of the Bible history, it is obvious that the same skill may be applied to that great variety of illustrative matter from every other source, which must be vividly narrated or described in order to make any impression. A leading American preacher has said that "he who would hold the ear of the people, must either tell stories, or paint pictures."

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* Quintil. IV, 2, 37–9.

† As to narration in preaching, comp. on Historical Subjects, chap 3, § 3, and on Expository Sermons, Part II, chap 3.

Power of description is of course partly a natural gift; but many intelligent men will marvel and lament that they cannot describe, when they have never fairly tried — never given themselves any general training in that respect, nor ever really studied any one scene or object which they attempted to describe. Such men are aware that they cannot work out an argument without much previous thought, but seem not aware that corresponding effort is necessary in order to achieve a good description.

He who would describe anything, must have *seen* it; not necessarily with bodily vision, but with the mind's eye. He must begin, then, with gaining correct information about the scene or object; and this information must extend, if possible, to details. As regards Scripture scenes, there is often need of a familiar acquaintance with Biblical Geography, and with the manners and customs of the Jews. While gathering such information, and after doing so, he must fasten his mind upon the scene, so that the imagination may realize it; he must look at it as he would at a landscape or a painting, first surveying the whole, then inspecting the most interesting details, and afterwards comprising all in a general view. This should be kept up, with the point of view varied, and repeated effort to imagine, till the whole scene stands out clear and vivid before the eye of the mind; only then is he prepared to describe it.

Remember now that a speaker is not to describe as the writer of a poem, a romance, or a book of travels might do, but is to make the description brief, and subordinate to the objects of his discourse; we may thus perceive, in a general way, how the description should be managed. The outlines of the picture should be rapidly drawn, and may be rude, provided they are distinct. Then certain prominent or characteristic points of the scene must be presented. And with some of these there should be given a few of the most suggestive details, which will arouse the hearer's imagination to fill up the picture. In this lies the great art of description, especially for speakers — to stimulate the hearer's imagination into seeing for himself. Sometimes there are a few details so characteristic, that they need only the slightest indication of outline to make a picture; as in a caricature, one or two peculiar features, somewhat exaggerated, and a few rude lines beside, will be more amusing than a finished picture, because more suggestive. And even where no remarkably striking details present themselves, one may contrive slight touches here and there, which will give life to the whole. If these are not afforded by our knowledge of the facts, they may be avowedly imagined, care being taken to have them suggest only what will harmonize with the facts. Thus in that remarkable home-scene at Bethany, after describing Mary seated at Jesus' feet, and hearing his word, one might imagine Martha as coming to the door of the room, her face heated with excitement and vexation, and after vainly striving to catch Mary's eye and call her forth, at length stepping straight to the Master himself, with her complaining request; and this slight glance at her before she enters will help to realize the scene.

Avoid elaborate description. The preacher is expected always to cherish so practical a design, and feel such absorbing earnestness, as not to have time for painting finished pictures. Hearers of good taste will always feel them to be out of place. As regards the temptation to give high-wrought descriptions, because it will show one's talent in that respect, this must of course be resisted, like all other temptations to display. But we cannot turn to the best account the historical portions of Scripture, nor use to advantage other narrative and pictorial illustration, without cultivating our powers of narration and description; and he who will patiently strive, under the guidance of correct principles, first to see clearly, and then to describe suggestively, may ere long surprise himself by the facility and pleasure with which he can bring out, in not many words, some story or scene from the Bible.*

§ 2. EXPLANATION OF SUBJECTS.

Here again there will be included, not merely the general subject of a discourse, but any other ideas which enter into the discussion. Both the former and the latter must often require explanation. Many matters, of truth and duty, are obscure and, without help, practically unintelligible to the popular mind; many questions are sadly perplexing. To answer such inquiries, to clear up difficulties, and make as plain as possible the way of truth and the path of duty, is, as well as the explanation of Scripture, an important part of the preacher's work.

One means of explaining subjects is by DEFINITION. "Definition is defined by the etymology of the word. It marks the limits of an idea. To define definition positively, we say that it teaches of what elements an idea, as a whole, is composed. It consists in bringing together many general ideas, of which one is limited by the others. When the idea, so to speak, is fortified, entrenched, so that on all sides it repels ideas which would mix themselves with it, the object is defined. We must not confound definition and judgment. Definition does but verify identity; judgment expresses a relation. . . . . Definition aims to make us know; judgment, to appreciate. Very often, however, definition appreciates, and involves judgment;

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* Comp. on Expos. Preaching, Part II, chap. 3, and on Elegance of Style, Part III, chap. 4. Some good suggestions as to Description, are found in Bain's Rhetoric, p. 153 ff.

and judgment is equivalent to a partial definition. We must not, however, confound with definition, those judgments which give force to a characteristic of an object, and are only designed to excite toward it such or such a sentiment. Examples:

"'Rivers are roads that move and carry us whither we would go.'

"'Hypocrisy is a homage which vice pays to virtue.'

"'Time is the treasure of the poor.'

"'A tomb is a monument placed on the boundary between two worlds.'

"'Love is the fulfilling of the law.'"

"When the notion of the attribute does not exhaust that of the subject, and one cannot be put indifferently for the other, we have not a definition, we have a judgment....... A definition is indeed a judgment, but a judgment which contains or begets all the judgments which at any time may be pronounced upon an object. And reciprocally, by combining all the judgments which at any time may be pronounced on an object, we have a definition." *

Vinet proceeds to give examples of definition, including one which is very often called a definition, but surely without propriety: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11 : 1.) Other judgments may be pronounced upon faith, besides this. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, etc., just as love is the fulfilling of the law. It may be said that faith is the means of union with Christ, but that is not defining faith. In fact, as we have before observed, it scarcely needs definition, or admits of it.

We may sometimes most readily define an idea by connecting it with another idea, either in the way of distinction, or of comparison.† And instead of, or in addition to

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* Vinet, Hom. p 161–3.

† See Vinet, p. 165.

definition, it is often well to employ exemplification, for which see below.

"Definition is not only a means of perspicuity, an element of instruction, the basis of argumentation; it is often the beginning of proof. Demonstration, at least, is firm and sure in proportion to the exactness and clearness of the definition." Every one has observed how important it is in beginning a controversial discussion, public or private, that the question should be exactly defined; otherwise confusion of ideas is inevitable. Now it is equally, though not so obviously important, in conducting a discussion alone, that one should clearly define to himself the subject in hand. In fact it is more important in this case, because controversy will sooner or later force the parties to perceive that they have not clearly understood the question, or understood it in the same way, while the solitary thinker, or the unanswered speaker, may remain permanently involved in the confusion or error produced by his lack of well-defined conceptions at the outset. And the same thing applies to the definition of leading *terms*. But while we must always define to ourselves, it is not always necessary that we should define to the audience. The proposition of the subject, if felicitous, may often be sufficiently perspicuous and precise; or we may see that the discussion itself will most effectually give clear and definite views of the subject. In all definitions stated, we should eschew formality, and "avoid too subtle distinctions and classifications, which assume a great habit of abstraction, and an exact knowledge of language on the part of the hearer." *

A second means of explaining ideas is by DIVISION. But the methods of dividing a subject, and of stating divisions, can be most conveniently examined when we come to discuss the arrangement of discourse.†

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* Vinet, p. 164–5

† Part II, chap. 2

Exemplification is often necessary, and almost always useful, in the work of explanation. The common mind does not readily apprehend general definitions, expressed in abstract terms; and even to the most cultivated thinkers an idea will become more vivid and interesting, when there is added to a precise definition some apposite example. It would be difficult to present to a popular audience a clear distinction between pride and vanity, in the way of definition; but by supposing certain circumstances, and showing how the proud man would act, and how the vain man, in such a case, or by taking up some particular action of a well-known character, and inquiring whether the motive here was pride or vanity, we may speedily make the difference plain. So instead of undertaking to explain faith, one may describe a believer; or in addition to stating in general terms what will make a Christian happy, may give an ideal portraiture of a Christian who was happy.* And still more useful are examples from real life. Every preacher turns to account in this way his observation of life, and some do so with very great effectiveness. But besides what we have personally observed, we have the wide fields of history, and especially of Scripture history, from which to derive examples. In selecting those to be used, the preacher must inquire not only what is most apposite, but what will be most intelligible and interesting to the particular audience. and what he himself can most effectively handle. Historical examples which would thrill one congregation, will make but little impression on another, not being familiar to them, or not linked to them by any ties of sympathy. In this, as in most respects, examples from Bible history are the best. They are more generally familiar than most others, and if any time be consumed in bringing the example vividly before the hearers, it is time

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*** Interesting and instructive examples of this kind may be found in Jeter's "Christian Mirror." New York, Sheldon & Co.**

well spent, because it promotes general acquaintance with the Scriptures.*

Among the commonest and most useful means of explanation, is COMPARISON. With this may be classed *Contrast*, and also *Analogy*, which depends on a resemblance, not in objects themselves, but in their respective relations to certain other objects. Analogy, however, is more frequently employed for the purpose of proof, and will be considered in the next chapter. Contrast needs no special remark.†

The great mass of our Lord's Parables are comparisons. "The kingdom of heaven *is like*," etc. "Unto what shall we *liken* this generation?" Some of them are thrown into the form of narrative; but others are mere statements of comparison, and he uses many striking comparisons which are never called parables. The comparison of his coming to that of a thief (Matt. 24 : 43–4) is an instructive example of the fact that comparison is all the more striking where we have one point of resemblance between objects or events in other respects very different. Several of the parables are rather cases of Exemplification than of Comparison; as, for instance, the Rich Man preparing to take his ease, the Pharisee and the Publican, the Good Samaritan. Many of them are introduced for other purposes in addition to that of explanation. But they are chiefly comparisons, and are mainly used to explain. They thus impressively exhibit to us the importance of explanation, and the value of comparison as a means of effecting it. The same high example reminds us how desirable it is to derive our comparisons from matters familiar to our hearers.‡

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* Comp. Vinet, p. 167, and see below on Illustration, chap. 7.

† See Day's Art of Discourse, p. 104–9.

‡ See further on Illustration, chap. 7.

CHAPTER VI.

ARGUMENT.

IMPORTANCE OF ARGUMENT IN PREACHING. § 1. PRELIMINARIES TO ARGUMENT — BURDEN OF PROOF, ETC. § 2. PRINCIPAL VARIETIES OF ARGUMENT. A. A PRIORI. B. FROM TESTIMONY. C. INDUCTION. D. FROM ANALOGY. E. DEDUCTION FROM ESTABLISHED TRUTHS. F. CERTAIN FORMS OF ARGUMENT. § 3. REFUTATION. § 4. ORDER OF ARGUMENTS. § 5. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS AS TO ARGUMENT.

ARGUMENT, in the logical, and at the same time popular, sense of the term, forms a very large and very important department of the materials of preaching There are preachers, it is true, who seem to consider that they have no occasion for reasoning, that everything is to be accomplished by authoritative assertion and impassioned appeal. And this notion is not new; for we find Aristotle complaining that previous writers on Rhetoric had concerned themselves only with the means of persuasion by appeals to feeling and prejudice. But preachers really have great use for argument. There are many gainsayers and doubters to be convinced, both as regards the truth of Christianity, and the truth of what we represent to be its teachings. There are many who in both respects believe, but whose religious affections and activity might be not a little quickened by convincing and impressive proofs that these things are so. "Even in the cases in which reasoning seems superfluous, it may be greatly useful, since its object is not so much to prove what is not yet believed, as to fill the mind with the evidence, and if we may so speak to multiply the brightness of truth." * And besides, there is in Christian countries a multitude of people who say they believe, because they do not disbelieve or question, whose minds remain in a negative state towards the gospel, which is often the most fatal form of unbelief. Argument, as to the truth and value and claims of the gospel, as to the peril and guilt of their position, is one of the means by which we must strive to bring them, through the special blessing of the Spirit, into some real, some operative belief. "Argument is also often useful in arousing the feelings. The mind becomes interested in a truth which is capable of clear proof. . . . . . The most successful preachers, as instruments of producing immediate conversion, the most successful revival preachers, are often at first severely argumentative. They thus gain power to bear down upon the conscience and heart." †

Men delight in argument—not in its forms, but in its reality. You will see a light in the faces of unlettered rustics, when an argument drawn from matters within their range of thought or suited to their taste, is presented in terms so plain, so vigorous, so interesting, that they take hold of it with ease, and feel all its force and impressiveness. Some forms of error, which exalt the intellectual at the expense of the spiritual, gain much acceptance, particularly with a certain class of minds, by the argumentative garb in which they appear. The teachers of these errors come to men accustomed to a sleepy acquiescence in truths which they have never heard vigorously discussed, bring their powers of argument into agreeable exercise, and they are won. Even those who maintain sound doctrine, sometimes support it by very unsound reasoning, and thereby leave the way open for some shrewd opponent to overthrow their arguments, and thus appear to overthrow their doctrine

* Vinet, p. 176. † Hoppin, p. 166.

Every preacher, then, ought to develop and discipline his powers in respect to argument. If averse to reasoning, he should constrain himself to practise it; if by nature strongly inclined that way, he must remember the serious danger of deceiving himself and others by false arguments. One who has not carefully studied some good treatise of Logic, should take the earliest opportunity to do so. It will render his mind sharper to detect fallacy, in others or in himself, and will help to establish him in the habit of reasoning soundly. The fact that, as so often sneeringly remarked, "preachers are never replied to," should make it a point of honor with preachers not to mislead their hearers by bad logic, and should render them exceedingly solicitous to avoid those self-deceptions, which they have no keen opponent to reveal. Well-conducted debating-societies, prolonged argument with a friend in private conversation, and sometimes newspaper discussions, are found by various preachers to be a valuable discipline in this respect. But one must constantly remind himself to argue for truth rather than for victory, and as a rule never to maintain a proposition which he does not really believe. The delicate perception of truth, and the enthusiastic love for it, will inevitably be impaired by a contrary course.

Yet in preaching we need not act as if everything had to be proved. Some things cannot be proved; some do not need to be, and others have been sufficiently proved before, and should now be taken for granted. Elaborate argument which is not called for, will only awaken doubt, or lead to weariness and disgust. We may usually assume the truth of Scripture.* And as to whatever the Scriptures plainly teach, while we must sometimes argue, it is often true, as Spurgeon has said, that the preacher should "dogmatize." "The accent of true authority is welcome to almost every one. We are prepossessed in favor of men who, in this world of uncertainty and perplexity, express themselves on a grave subject with confidence and command. . . . . . The person of preachers is nothing, their message is the whole; and not for their person, but for their message, do they claim respect; but they would be as culpable not to demand this respect for the divine thought of which they are the depositaries, as they would be foolish and ridiculous to demand it for their own thoughts."* But the right to speak with such authority will be acknowledged, among Protestants, only where the preacher shows himself able to prove, whenever it is appropriate, all that he maintains.

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* Comp. chap. 3, § 1, Doctrinal Subjects.

Argument in preaching has one peculiarity. There is a great authority, the Word of God, whose plain utterances upon any question must be held by the preacher as decisive and final. This is proof without arguing in the narrow sense. Somewhat similarly do all men prove by the direct appeal to consciousness; "*you know* that so and so is true," will in some cases settle the question. So, too, we frequently appeal to common sense; though it should be noticed that men often put forward as a judgment of common sense what is only some opinion of their own, some conclusion reached by a process of reasoning, but so obscure as to escape their consciousness and thus hide its fallacies from their view. But the Scriptures furnish a standard of final appeal having a far more frequent and extensive application. This does not at all enable us to dispense with argument. We have sometimes to prove that the Scriptures are such a standard; and to show what the various passages of Scripture teach on a subject, often requires not merely exposition but argument. Many truths have to be established partly by argument on other grounds, reinforced and confirmed by indirect teachings of the Bible; and it is gratifying to believers, and demanded by unbelievers, that we should, wherever it is possible, exhibit the concurrence of reason and experience with the teachings of revelation Thus we have constant need of argument. But in all our reasoning, care should be taken to treat the authority of Scripture as paramount, and wherever its utterances are distinct and unquestionable, as decisive.*

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* Vinet, p. 228–9.

§ 1. PRELIMINARIES TO ARGUMENT.†

There are several questions which require to be considered, if at all, at the outset of an argument, and which are here thrown together under the head of preliminaries.

1. Shall the proposition be stated at the beginning? It should certainly be very clear to the speaker's own mind. To argue about one does not exactly know what, is idle, and in many ways hurtful. As a general thing, it should be distinctly stated to the audience. If the subject be one very difficult for the common mind to grasp, it may be better to present it in parts, to give first the several arguments which will elucidate as well as establish the proposition, and then state it in conclusion. Or if there be a known unwillingness to hear the subject discussed, or a strong prejudice against the proposition to be established, it may be best to withhold the enunciation of the proposition. Even here, however, it will often be better to speak out frankly and boldly. Men always dislike to be caught unawares, and are especially intolerant of this on the part of a preacher, in whom logical strategy can be so readily

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* See below, § 2, B, E, and also § 4, Order of Arguments.

† In this chapter much use is made of Whately, whose discussion of Arguments is the most valuable part of his work on Rhetoric, and unequalled by other treatises. Some things have also been drawn directly from Aristotle, and from a variety of writers, as acknowledged in detail. The chapter contains a good deal which is not found in Whately, or which differs widely from his views. The attempt is made to arrange the subject in a simpler and more practical way than has been met with in existing works.

stigmatized as uncandid. And the preacher must always avoid as far as possible the appearance of being the antagonist of his hearers; his designs are friendly and he wishes no concealment. Only therefore in case of violent repugnance or extreme prejudice, or for some other special reason, will it be judicious for a preacher to keep back the statement of his proposition.*

In stating the proposition, or any division of it, and in the whole conduct of an argument, great pains should be taken to avoid ambiguous terms, or if such must be employed, to limit their meaning by the connection, or distinctly define them. Every one has observed how important it is, in public or private discussion between two parties, that they shall understand the leading terms of the question alike; every one has seen some long dispute turn out to have been merely a dispute about words. But though less obvious, the danger of this is just as great where a man is to argue without reply; nay greater, because conflict is apt to develop, sooner or later, the difference as to the meaning of terms, while the unanswered reasoner may continue to the end confused and misled by obscure, indefinite or ambiguous words, or utterly misapprehended by hearers who understand those words differently. The following terms, for example, frequently occur in religious argument, and very often embarrass and mislead by their ambiguity, viz. necessary, possible and impossible, reason, right and righteousness, good and evil, law, nature, person, church.†

2. Burden of proof. On this subject, certain very erroneous views have lately obtained currency, from a confusion of two different senses of an ambiguous term.

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* Comp. Day's Art of Discourse, p. 117; Vinet, p. 180.

† Most of these are explained in the Appendix to Whately' ogic, though not all in a satisfactory manner.

It is obviously very important, at the outset of any discussion, to perceive clearly, and make clear to the hearers, on which side lies the *onus probandi,* i. e. burden of proof. Now it is a principle generally acknowledged, and evidently correct, that *no man is under obligation to prove a negative.* The reasons for this are manifest. Any proposition which depends on proof, is true only when it is proven, for until then it depends on nothing, has no support. Why require a man to knock down what has not yet been set up? And then to prove a negative would often require impossible knowledge. John Foster has pointed out that the atheist who not merely denies that there is a God, but asserts that there is no God, must have infinite knowledge in order to make sure of his assertion, for otherwise, somewhere beyond the bounds of his knowledge might be proof that there is a God; that is to say, in respect of knowledge he must himself be God. Something similar would be true in most cases of the attempt to prove a negative. It would demand more than finite knowledge, more than human powers. To prove a negative, then, is often impossible, and never fairly required. "He who alleges must prove. . . . . . And the stress is to be laid on the *fact* of alleging or affirming, not on the *form* of the proposition itself as affirmative or negative. . . . . . If the allegation be in the negative form, it does not shift the burden of proof. . . . . . He who makes an allegation puts into being a statement that did not exist before. He is properly called upon to account for it — prove it and thus make it a truth." *

The burden of proving, then, rests on him who alleges; his allegation is nothing until proven, and until some proof be adduced by him, the opponent has nothing to do. When proof is adduced, the opponent examines how far it is valid and conclusive, still acting only on the defensive. If in addition he presents an *objection*, he must (unless it be perfectly evident) prove the objection to be real, and applicable; he alleges here, and he must prove. So the principle stands unaltered, and appears to be unalterable and universal — he who alleges must prove; no man is under obligation to prove a negative.

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* Day, p. 158.

But Whately and some others introduce the word *presumption*, and assert that the burden of proof always lies on the side opposite to that which has the presumption in its favor.* In order to maintain this to be true, presumption is defined as follows: "According to the most correct use of the term, a 'Presumption' in favor of any supposition means, not (as has been sometimes erroneously imagined) a preponderance of probability in its favor, but such a *preoccupation* of the ground, as implies that it must stand good till some sufficient reason is adduced against it; in short, that the *Burden of Proof* lies on the side of him who would dispute it." By this definition, Whately assumes what he ought to have proven; and in every question in which we should *in any sense* say that the presumption is in favor of one side, he assumes that the burden of proof rests on the other side. If presumption ever denotes such a preoccupation of the ground, it certainly does not always, nor commonly. A presumption in favor of any proposition is, in the most general statement, something which inclines us to believe it true before examining the proof, or independently of the proof. This presumption may be slight, or it may be strong. There may be a strong presumption in favor of some accusation, as that Nero burnt Rome, growing out of the known character of the person accused; yet this does not shift the burden of proof to him; it remains on the accuser as much as ever, though this presumption reinforces his proof, in fact would be made a part of his proof. The presumption may be on either side, or on neither, without altering the burden of proof at all. Thus it becomes clear that Whately's definition is at least not universally correct; indeed, he himself does not claim that it applies to the general use, but only to "the most correct use of the term." And so it assuredly is *not* true as a general proposition, that "the burden of proof always rests on the side opposite to that in favor of which the presumption exists." *

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* Whately. p 139; Day, p. 156.

But there are some uses of the term presumption in which at first sight this correlation appears to exist. "Thus, it is a well-known principle of the Law, that every man (including a prisoner brought up for trial) is to be *presumed* innocent till his guilt is established. This does not, of course, mean that we are to *take for granted* he is innocent; for if that were the case, he would be entitled to immediate liberation: nor does it mean that it is antecedently *more likely than not* that he is innocent; or, that the majority of those brought to trial are so. It evidently means only that the 'burden of proof' lies with the accusers; — that he is not to be called to prove his innocence, or to be dealt with as a criminal till he has done so." † Now it is a peculiarity of Law, that it confines its view to things proven. The judge and the jury may be well satisfied in their own minds that the accused is guilty, but they cannot convict unless the guilt be proven. They must confine themselves to the evidence. They must approach the examination of the evidence without prejudgment, and without being affected by any presumption (in the ordinary sense of the term), whether for or against the prisoner, without considering whether his guilt or innocence is "antecedently more likely;" accordingly, the effort is made to obtain a jury who have not formed any opinion on the question. Since, then, all presumption on other grounds is in law excluded, and everything but proof is to be ignored, it follows that *law* admits but one presumption, viz. that the man is innocent; and this presumption must be made in all cases, because the man *is* innocent, so far as the law has to do with him, until *proof* be brought of his guilt. Antecedent to proof, or independent of proof, there can be but the one view of the question. So the fact that in this legal usage the presumption and the burden of proof lie on opposite sides, does not spring from any general relation to that effect between the two, but grows out of the restriction of legal decisions to proof, and the consequent exclusion of every presumption but that of innocence. And even in this very peculiar and restricted sense, to say "that every man is to be presumed innocent until his guilt is established," does *not* "mean only," or in strictness of speech *mean* at all, "that the burden of proof lies with the accusers;" it means that every other presumption must be excluded, and this one alone admitted, because nothing but proof is to be taken into account.

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* Day.

† Whately, p. 139.

A somewhat similar technical restriction has place when we say that there is in law a "presumption" in favor of those who hold property in *possession*. This means, we are told, "that no man is to be disturbed in his possessions till some claim against him shall be established." * The burden of proof lies on the other claimant. Now apart from legal provisions, possession does in most cases afford a logical presumption, antecedent to proof, in favor of the possessor's right; though not in all cases. But the law, as a measure of expediency, to promote order and security, declares that the *legal* presumption shall always be in favor of the possessor. This is usually in accordance with right, and as the law must have general rules, this is the best general rule. The logical presumption may sometimes be in favor of the new claimant, on whom the burden of proof lies, but the legal presumption is made to be always against him. Indeed the law sometimes goes farther, and provides that possession for a certain number of years shall be held to establish right, and cannot afterwards be disturbed; this also being best as a general rule, though sometimes working great injustice. In the second case, then, as well as in the former, the "presumption" is made to fall on the opposite side to that on which the "burden of proof" lies, not by any natural and general relation between them, but by the peculiar character and provisions of law.

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* Whately, p. 140.

Again. "There is a Presumption in favor of every *existing* institution. Many of these (we will suppose, the majority) may be susceptible of alteration for the better; but still the 'Burden of Proof' lies with him who proposes an alteration; simply on the ground that since a change is not a good in itself, he who demands a change should show cause for it. No one is *called on* (though he may find it advisable) to defend an existing institution, till some argument is adduced against it; and that argument ought in fairness to prove, not merely an actual inconvenience, but the possibility of a change for the better." *

As in the former cases the general logical and the legal presumption were confounded, so here there is a confusion of logical with what might be called *practical* presumption. It is practically best to retain existing institutions until they are proven to be inconvenient, and until there is also shown the possibility of a change for the better. But this aversion to change, and practical preference for things as they are, even to the extent of bearing known ills until we see clearly how to do better, is a very different matter from a logical presumption that existing arrangements are right and good.

There are really two questions, if we begin to argue about an existing institution. *First,* is this institution right and good? Here the presumption may be either way; the burden of proof is on him who alleges that it *is* right and good. There is commonly one ground of presumption in favor of any existing, and especially any long-continued institution, namely, that men are likely to have had good reasons for establishing and maintaining it. But this is often greatly weakened by the well-known selfishness and folly of mankind, and sometimes is completely destroyed, or thrown on the other side, by the obvious fact that here men have only been submitting to what they were hitherto unable to prevent. Various other grounds of presumption there may be, for or against the institution, but whatever and wherever the presumption, the burden of proof, in discussing the excellence of the institution, is on him who affirms its excellence. He may declare himself content, and refuse to argue the question, submitting to the inevitable charge that he is afraid of the light. But if he consents to argue at all, the burden of proof is on him.

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* Whately, p. 141

And this applies to the question of the truth of Christianity. Whately says that the burden of proof was at first on the advocates of Christianity, but is now on its opponents, because there is a presumption in favor of it as an existing institution.* Such a presumption there is in favor of Christianity, although there is in this respect an equal, if not greater presumption in favor of several other religions; but the moment a man consents to discuss the truth of Christianity, the burden of proof is still on him who alleges it to be true. The other side cannot be required to prove a negative.

The *second* question is, Should this existing institution be maintained? If the former question has been clearly decided in the affirmative, there will still be room to inquire whether something else would not be equally right, and *better* in its results. And if the institution (for example, a form of government, benevolent organization, or usage

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* Whately, p. 143.

of society) is not altogether good, or even not certainly right, it may still be best to retain it, at least for the present, until we see our way to something more satisfactory. The two questions, then, are entirely distinct, and should not be confounded. And what was called above a practical presumption, is thus seen to be really a logical presumption, but with reference to a distinct and directly practical question.

These considerations will explain another case. "It should be also remarked under this head, that in any one question the Presumption will often be found to lie on different sides, in respect of different parties. E. g. In the questions between a member of the Church of England, and a Presbyterian, or member of any other Church, on which side does the Presumption lie? Evidently, to each, in favor of the religious community to which he at present belongs. He is not to separate from the Church of which he is a member, without having some sufficient reason to allege." * According to the author's view, the burden of proof would then be properly thrown by each upon the other, and there could be no discussion. But two questions are confounded. In the practical question whether a man shall leave his church. the presumption is in favor of remaining, till sufficient reason for leaving be presented by others, or ascertained by himself. Meantime, it is a man's duty to examine the grounds of his opinion and practice, in this and in other important matters, as rapidly and thoroughly as his opportunities will permit. But in the other question, which church is in the right, if the two consent to argue it, the burden of proof is on each in behalf of his own. He who in the argument alleges a particular church to be in the right must bring proof that it is. If the other adduces objections to this church, he must bring proof that his *objections* are well-founded, but this does not shift the burden of proof as regards the question.

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* Whately, p. 145.

Whately also applies his theory that there is a presumption in favor of existing institutions (without distinguishing the questions involved), and that a presumption in favor of one side throws the burden of proof on the other, to Episcopacy and to Infant-baptism. The latter, for example, as an existing practice, was merely *retained* by the Church of England, "considering the burden to lie on those who denied its existence in the primitive church, to show when it did arise." Of course one will continue to practise as he has done, till he sees cause to do otherwise. If he refuses to discuss or examine the propriety of the practice, taking it for granted that all the opinions and usages in which he has been reared are correct, unless some one will assume the task of proving that they are not (proving a negative), then upon that principle all mankind may remain in all respects stationary. If he consents to argue, or personally to examine, its propriety, then the burden of proof is upon him who alleges that it is proper, and upon the objector only as regards his objections. So the presumption in favor of retaining at present, differs from a presumption that the practice is right; and the latter exists here only so far as we may believe that men have introduced no changes of Christian usage since the apostolic day. As to this slender presumption, those who deny the existence of infant-baptism in the primitive church, have no need, in order to meet the presumption, to "show when it did arise," but only, as the author says just before on a similar question, to "point out some conceivable way in which it *might* have arisen." Besides, infant-baptism does not present itself as a human institution, which it might be *presumed* men had good reasons for establishing, but as a *divine* institution, of which, as Whately says just after on another question, "the fair *presumption* is, that we shall find all such distinctly declared in Scripture." The absence of such a distinct declaration of Scripture in favor of infant-baptism, creates a presumption against it as a divine institution. But none of the presumptions alter the burden of proof. In the question whether it is right for a man to continue the practice to which he has been reared until he gains more light, the presumption is in favor; in the question whether something not distinctly taught in Scripture be a divine institution, the presumption is against; in both questions alike, the burden of proof is on him who alleges. The other side is not bound to prove a negative. The argument as to Episcopacy is very much the same.

Is it not now plain that there is no such correlation between presumption and burden of proof as some have imagined? A presumption in favor of one side does *not* throw the burden of proof on the other. The cases supposed to establish that it does, are either cases in which the presumption is restricted by the character and provisions of law, or in which two questions are confounded, the burden of proof standing opposed to the presumption in one of the questions, and being therefore assumed as doing so in the other. The presumption as to a question may be on either side, according to the nature of things or the circumstances of the case; there may be, on different grounds, presumption on both sides; but the burden of proof is always on him who alleges.*

An instructive example as to the burden of proof is afforded by the argument with Romanists. They say, Christ promised to his Church continuous existence; the

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* In this discussion some help has been derived from the able work of Carson on Baptism, chap. 1, in which there is a review of Whately on this subject. If it be said that Carson and the present writer are biassed in their views of the general question by its bearings upon Episcopacy, Infant-baptism, etc., there is equal reason to suspect the same thing in the case of Archbishop Whately

Church of Rome has had continuous existence; therefore it is Christ's Church. Here the burden of proof is upon the Romanist to show that *no other* Church has had continuous existence; he must prove that the Greek Church, the Church of England, the Reformed Churches of the continent, the Baptists, etc., have *not* existed continuously from the beginning. We are not thus demanding of a man that he shall prove a negative, but only pointing out that the Romanist's own argument requires him to do so, and is worthless if he does not. The others say to him, Well, prove that we have *not* had continuity. But if either of these others maintains, whether for the purpose of a like argument or for any other purpose, that it *has* had continuous existence, then on it rests the burden of proof.

3. Indirect proof.

Instead of direct proof that the proposition is true, we sometimes adopt the indirect method, viz. by showing that the contrary supposition would lead to something known to be untrue, or in itself absurd (*reductio ad absurdum*). This plan is very often pursued in Geometry, where only one or two other suppositions would be possible. But in moral reasoning this does not often happen, and hence the *reductio ad absurdum* is for us chiefly important in Refutation.*

§ 2. PRINCIPAL VARIETIES OF ARGUMENT.

It is not proposed to begin with a formal analysis and classification of arguments, but to explain the nature and use of the leading varieties; it will afterwards be easy to show the place which these hold in a complete classification.

A. Arguments *a priori*.

The phrase *a priori* has come to be so variously applied and loosely used, that some propose to abandon it. Yet it is of constant occurrence, particularly in theological and philosophical discussions, and no fit substitute has been suggested. It seems desirable, therefore, to state distinctly the different senses in which the phrase is employed, showing which are legitimate and which unwarrantable, and in what cases there is special necessity for care.

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* See below, § 2, F.

To argue *a priori* is literally to argue from something prior to something posterior; a movement in the opposite direction being denoted by *a posteriori.*

1. It was originally used by logical writers, and is still chiefly used, to denote an argument *from cause to effect.* It is thus, of course, applicable to any case of proper physical causes, but is chiefly applied to argument from a necessary principle, such as *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of nothing nothing is made). This species of argument was formerly employed on a very large scale for the ascertainment of physical phenomena and laws. Some principle was laid down, regarded as necessary and universal, and from this it was argued that the facts of existence must be so and so. But modern science, founded on observation, has shown that some of the supposed necessary principles are not true, or not universal. E. g. Two centuries ago it was a maxim universally admitted that "a body cannot act where it is not." This was used in an *a priori* argument against the theory of gravitation; the sun cannot possibly act upon the earth, because it is not there. Newton himself admitted the force of this, saying in a letter, "That one body should act on another at a distance, through a vacuum, without the mediation of anything else by and through which their action and force may be conveyed from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity, that I believe no man who in philosophical matters has a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it." Accordingly he imagined a subtle ether filling the space between

the sun and earth, and by its contact with both, rendering it possible that one should act on the other.* At the present day all this occasions no difficulty, and the language of the great philosopher provokes a smile. Such facts should not lead us, as some have been led, to reject all arguments from necessary principles, but should make us very careful in using them.

The conclusion from an *a priori* argument (supposing it logically conducted) will be certain, if on the one hand the supposed cause is a real one, and on the other hand, there is nothing to interfere with its operation; but if the reality of the cause (or necessary principle) be subject to question, or its operations be liable to interference, then the conclusion is only more or less probable. There is an *a priori* argument for the existence of God,† which begins thus: "Positive existence is possible, for it involves no contradiction." Here the "first principle" assumed is, that whatever involves no contradiction is possible, and this is repeatedly appealed to, in the course of the argument. Then after pointing out that possible existence must be either necessary or contingent, the position is taken that *some* existence is necessary, for otherwise all existence would be impossible. And then by a series of abstract arguments, the conclusion is reached, that there is one necessarily existent Being, the cause of all other existence besides himself, and that he is eternal, infinite, etc. Now supposing the successive steps of this argument to be logical, the conclusion will be certain if the principle started from is certain. When in proving that we have a Revelation, it is first argued *a priori* from the character of God and the condition of man that a revelation *was to be expected*, this is only a probable argument, for we do not, apart from revelation, sufficiently understand the character of God to infer with certainty that it would lead him to give a revelation to creatures in such a condition.

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* See Mill's Logic, Book V, chap. 3, § 3.

† See Pye Smith's Theology, p. 99.

The name *a priori* is inaccurately applied to some arguments which really *begin* with facts of observation (and are so far *a posteriori*), but which afterwards pursue a chain of abstract reasoning upon what these necessarily involve. Such was Samuel Clarke's argument for the existence of God, which is constantly called an *a priori* argument because it introduces certain supposed necessary principles, and reasons for the most part abstractly, and yet (as Hamilton has remarked*) in fact begins with a matter of observation, viz. "we are sure that something does exist."†

2. The use of the phrase has been gradually extended to include argument from what appears to us a general principle — not asserted as a necessary principle, but one which is believed to hold true in all cases. Unless such a supposed general principle necessitates a certain result, that result cannot be inferred from it as an argument *a priori*. The principle is in that case only a generalized fact, like the generalizations of Natural History, informing us what regularly is, not in any sense causing it to be so. But in this unwarranted direction the use of the phrase is sometimes carried very far. Men attempt to dignify as an argument *a priori*, or, as they sometimes call it, an argument from general principles, what is really an argument from some arbitrary preconception, prejudice, fanciful theory, or mere opinion, of their own. And some appear to think that any argument which looks general, or abstract, may be called an argument *a priori*. We must then look out for loose applications of the phrase on the

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* Hamilton, ed. of Reid, p. 762: Fleming, Vocab. of Philosophy, p. 42.

† See the statement of the argument in Pye Smith s Theology, p. 101.

part of others, and carefully confine ourselves to the legitimate use.

3. The attempt has been made to give to argument *a priori* another distinct sense, viz. the argument from a substance to its attributes.* Thus, John is a man, therefore he possesses intelligence, will, conscience, a bodily organization, etc. But this is called an argument *a priori* only by overlooking a distinction. John is a man, therefore he will act conscientiously, is an argument *a priori*, because it means that there is something in the constitution of man which leads him to act conscientiously; it is really an argument from cause to effect — with only a probable conclusion, because other causes so often interfere with the operation of man's conscience. But to say, John is a man, therefore he has a conscience, is only an argument from general to particular, only bringing out one of the particulars which go to make up the general. This is not in any sense an argument *from something prior*, for being a man is not prior to having a conscience, but includes it. The argument, John is mortal, for he is a man,† is somewhat ambiguous. Taken strictly, it infers the attribute mortality, and is thus simply a common deduction of particular from general. But understand it to mean, John will die, for he is a man, and you have an argument *a priori*, which, again, is really from cause to effect — there is that in a man which will cause him to die. So if the term *law* is employed. When law denotes "merely a general fact," as, It is the law of material bodies that they gravitate, and we deduce any particular fact from the general one, the deduction is by no means an argument *a priori*. If it were meant that material bodies have that in their constitution which causes them to gravitate, then you could take the case of any particular material body, and infer, *a priori*, that it will gravitate

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* Day, p. 128–33

† Day, p. 129.

This confusion of law as the statement of a general fact, with law as denoting that which causes, or somehow necessitates facts, has led to much false reasoning in recent works, particularly in discussions of Divine Providence.*

So then, to infer the attribute from the substance is *not* an *a priori* argument. In the cases which seem to be such it is really an inference of the result from the constitution, which is the effect from the cause. This is what Vinet is evidently thinking of when he says, "Proof *a priori*, which proves the fact from its cause *or its nature*. . . . . . I prove *a priori*, that lying is offensive to God, because he is a God of truth." † The argument is, that there is that in God's nature, as a God of truth, which must render lying offensive to him; and this is really an argument from cause to effect. The remark may be added, that *a priori* argument from the Nature of God, must be employed with great care. God will always act consistently with his nature, and so conclusions might here be drawn with certainty, but for the fact that we so imperfectly understand the Divine Nature, and the relations thereto of particular lines of conduct. 'God is just, therefore he will give all men an equal chance of salvation,' 'God is good, therefore he will finally save all men,' are conclusions which the angel Gabriel would feel himself too ignorant to draw.

4. There is a peculiar use of *a priori* in some modern philosophical works. Kant applied the phrase "knowledge *a priori*," to denote knowledge possessed by the mind *prior* to all that it derives from experience; and then knowledge which is derived from, comes *after* experience, is called knowledge *a posteriori*.‡ A pair of antithetical phrases

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* See M'Cosh on the Divine Government.

† Vinet, p. 180. The expression (perhaps due to the student whose notes are followed), '*its* nature,' tends to confuse, but the examples show what is meant.

‡ See Fleming, Vocabulary of Philosophy, p. 42-3, a useful book

will of course admit of being turned towards different points of the compass, provided they are kept opposite to each other.* Kant's use of these two phrases, which he distinctly defined, has been followed by some subsequent writers. Let it be understood, then, by the student, that the expressions, *a priori knowledge*, *a priori truths*, etc., mean something entirely different from *a priori argument.* We may indeed argue *a priori* from what these writers would call an *a priori* truth (e. g. every effect must have a cause), and here there is a point of apparent contact between the two senses of the phrase, but they are altogether different.

An argument *a priori* has been thus shown to be, in all legitimate uses of the phrase, an argument from cause to effect; whether it be from a proper physical cause, or from something in the general nature of things which *necessitates* a certain result, or from some thing in the nature of a particular object or person which tends to produce a certain result.

With reference to the employment of arguments, whether *a priori* or not, bearing upon the relations of cause and effect, there are ambiguities in the familiar use of language, which render necessary two distinctions. *First*, we must distinguish between logical and physical sequence. E. g. "With many of them God was not well-pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." The fact that God was not well-pleased with them is the logical consequent of their overthrow, being proved from it; but is, so to speak, the physical antecedent, being the cause of it. These two kinds of sequence are very often confounded, and very liable to be, from the fact that we use the same terms, 'for,' 'because,' 'therefore,' 'consequently,' etc. to denote both; yet they may coincide, or be opposed to each other, or may exist separately. Particularly frequent is the error of presenting that as the *cause* of something, which is only the *proof* of it.* *Secondly*, it is important to distinguish between cause and occasion. The inebriate says to the liquor-seller, or to his boon companion, "You are the cause of my getting drunk," when these were but the occasion, and the cause was his appetite. To remove some of the occasions for any kind of vicious indulgence, will be likely to lessen the evil, but we must not imagine that this is removing the cause.

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* For example, the terms *analytic* and *synthetic* are employed by Vinet (p. 180), and Potter (Sacred Eloquence, p. 149), in diametrically opposite ways with reference to the same things; and each use can be justified, depending on the way in which the matter is regarded. Day (p. 122) has a third use, quite different from either, on a kindred topic.

B. Arguments from testimony.

It would be convenient if the words *testimony* and *authority* could be kept entirely distinct, the former applied only to matters of fact, and the latter only to matters of judgment and opinion.† Yet common usage sometimes confounds these terms, even as men are so apt not to distinguish facts from their own judgments concerning them.‡ In the alleged "spiritual manifestations" of which we now hear so much, there is unquestionable testimony that tables rise and move, without the application of any apparent and adequate physical force, that certain peculiar rapping sounds are heard, etc., and upon the testimony these matters of fact should be without hesitation admitted. But what causes these movements and sounds, whether some unknown physical force, or some unknown spiritual agency, is purely matter of opinion. Those who have most frequently witnessed the phenomena, are not thereby the best prepared to judge of their cause; while the supposed interpretation of the rapping noises, and the correspondence of such interpretations with facts otherwise known, are matters which open a wide door for all manner of self-delusions and impostures. We must accustom ourselves, and educate the people, to distinguish more carefully than is common between testimony as to matters of fact, and mere judgments, opinions, and hypotheses as to their explanation.

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* See more in Whately, p. 75 ff.

† Day, p. 138, asserts such a distinction as if it were absolute.

‡ See Whately, p. 79–83.

It is not appropriate here to discuss the general subject of testimony, as bearing upon the administration of justice. And yet a minister does well to consider carefully the rules of evidence in the courts of justice, endeavoring, in every case, to find the principle involved, that he may apply it, with the necessary adaptations, to the matters with which he is concerned. Those parts of the subject with which the preacher frequently has to deal, will be briefly treated.

(1.) In testimony as to matters of fact, the points to be considered are, on the one hand, the character and number of the witnesses, and on the other, the character of the things attested.

As to the *character* of the witnesses, we of course consider mainly their veracity, but also their intelligence, and opportunities of knowing the facts. A large *number* of witnesses will obviously make the evidence stronger, provided they speak each from his own knowledge, and not from what others have told him. When there are several such independent witnesses, their testimony will differ as to some points of detail. Where the details are numerous, no man will be expected to remember and state them all; and each will select according to what he happened to observe, what specially commended itself to his mind, or he has had frequent occasion since to recall, or what falls in with the general design and drift of his statement, or is suggested, point after point, by the natural association of ideas. If all were to agree in the details of an extended statement, we should feel sure that they had in some way learned from each other, or had all drawn from a common source. These principles are familiar to the English and American mind. Had the Germans been accustomed to trial by jury, we should not have found able scholars denying the trustworthiness of the gospel narratives because of the "discrepancies" they present. These discrepancies, nowhere involving real contradiction, only show that the witnesses are independent, and thus immensely strengthen their combined testimony to the substantial facts. The evidence is also strengthened by manifestly undesigned coincidences. A great number of such coincidences, clearly undesigned, between minor statements in the Epistles of Paul and in the Acts, have been exhibited by Paley, in his celebrated "Horæ Paulinæ" ("Hours with Paul"), a work which admirably fortifies the Christian Evidences, and presents the most useful lessons as to the value of testimony. And the less important in itself is the subject-matter of such coincidences, the more certain will it be that they are undesigned. In such a case, the lightest matters are often the weightiest.

The unintentional testimony of adversaries is frequentl of great value. Thus the opposers of Christianity in the early centuries, both Heathen and Jewish, in endeavoring to account for the miracles of our Lord as wrought by magic, have shown that they felt it impossible to deny the reality of the occurrences.

On the other hand, there is to be considered the character of *the things attested.* Things in themselves improbable will of course require more testimony in order to gain our credence. Such is the case with miracles. Those who take the ground that miracles are impossible, beg the question, and must be omniscient in order to make sure that their position is correct. But miracles are in themselves highly improbable. That some spiritual force should so counteract the operation of great physical forces as for a time to prevent their otherwise uniform results, is a thing which we are naturally slow to believe. This improbability, however, is greatly diminished where we see important occasion for such interference, as where miracles are wrought to authenticate a revelation. The Christian miracles have not only this, but another advantage. The character and teachings of Christ are inseparably associated with miracles. He who denies the miracles denies the supernatural origin of the character and teachings, and must then account for these as merely human and natural, which the ablest and most ingenious infidels, after a great variety of attempts, have utterly failed to do. Thus the *a priori* question, the question of antecedent probability, is here reduced to this — which is more improbable, that miracles should have been wrought, upon such occasion as the introduction of Christianity, or that the character and teachings of Christ should be merely human and of natural origin.

Thus the general improbability of miracles is here much lessened by the adequate occasion, and then is more than counterbalanced by a yet greater improbability.

Moreover, the testimony of others to our Lord's miracles is not only strong and unquestionable in itself, but has the unique and invincible reinforcement of our Lord's own testimony. Jesus professed to work miracles; *he* cannot by possibility have been deceived on the subject; and so, either he did work miracles, or he was a bad man. Against his character all the objections to miracles must shatter, like surf against the rock. And this is not arguing in a circle; not proving the miracles by Christ, and Christ by the miracles. The concurrence of the two makes it easy to account for both; the denial of the miracles necessitates conclusions more improbable than the miraculous.

The testimony to our Lord's resurrection has been often and thoroughly discussed,* and shown to be irrefragable.

It is especially strengthened by the great slowness of belief exhibited by the disciples. "They doubted, that we might not doubt."†

The evidence of Christian experience ought never to be overlooked. The believer finds a change wrought in him which testifies to the reality and power of Christianity, and he in turn bears witness to others that the change which they observe in him was wrought in connection with believing.

(2.) Matters of opinion, as distinguished from matters of fact, might, as above remarked, be conveniently designated by the term *authority.* But this term is sometimes applied to testimony as to matters of fact, especially where it is particularly strong and convincing testimony, and is also frequently used to denote some combination of testimony as to fact, and reliable judgment or opinion.

The so-called authority of the Fathers, must be differently regarded in different cases. As to the question which books were of apostolic origin, they afford us testimony,—though in the case of all but the earliest it is not original but transmitted testimony,—and also the authority of their judgment as to the weight of the entire evidence known to them, only a part of which do they hand down to us. In respect to such questions they are known to have been very critical, and we may well attach great value both to their testimony and their authority. But as to the interpretation of the sacred books, the question what Scripture teaches, we have only their authority, their judgment.

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* Mention may be made of that piquant little work, Sherlock's "Trial of the Witnesses," in which the evidence of the resurrection is examined according to the forms of law.

† Some of the views here presented as to testimony, and some others, will be found in Whately, p. 78–104.

Most of them were loose interpreters, and they were all greatly influenced by philosophical opinions, prejudices of various kinds, and especially, with rare exceptions, by an extreme fondness for allegory. Except, then, the cases in which familiarity with Greek, with ancient customs, and the like, gives special weight to the opinions of a Father, their authority as to the meaning of Scripture is not great, and in fact not justly equal to that of some later writers.

The Scriptures themselves are an authority indeed. All that they testify to be fact is thereby fully proven, all that they teach as true and right is thereby established and made obligatory. There are some subjects on which the Bible is our sole authority, such as the Trinity, justification by faith, the conditions of the future life, and the positive ordinances of Christianity, viz. baptism and the Lord's supper.* The Christian reasoner should seek fully to appreciate this unparalleled authority, and should heedfully observe its proper relation to all other means of proof.†

The generally received opinions of mankind, and the proverbs and maxims which express the collective judgment of many, have a greater or less authority according to the nature of the case. Those, for example, which are readily attributable to human superstitions or selfishness can claim but little weight. Proverbs, or what the common people call "old sayings," are very often, as it has been remarked, but the striking expression of some half truth, or the result of some hasty generalization, and in many cases they can be matched by other sayings to precisely the opposite effect.‡

In respect to the whole matter of evidence and belief it is important to bear in mind the relation between belief and disbelief. As regards many truths of Christianity, he who disbelieves them, is thereby compelled to believe something which shall take their place. He who staggers at the difficulties, real or alleged, which attach to the Christian evidences, must not forget the difficulties of infidelity. We must believe something, must believe something as to the problems of religion, and if we go away from Christ, "to whom shall we go?"*

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* Comp. Porter's Hom. Lect. XI.

† Comp. below, E, and also § 4, Order of Arguments

‡ Comp. on Sources of Illustration, chap. 7, § 2, (5.)

C. Induction.

Induction has been very simply defined as "the process of drawing a general rule from a sufficient number of particular cases."† Finding something to be true of certain individual objects, we conclude that the same thing is true of the whole class to which those individuals belong, and afterwards prove it to be true of any new object, simply by showing that that object belongs to the same class. Induction is, in popular usage, the commonest form of argument, and that which oftenest involves error. Men in general do not argue from general principles or previously established truths, nearly so often as from examples. These examples they indolently observe, and without extensive comparison or careful scrutiny, they hastily infer that what a certain person did is right for them, that what is true of certain individuals, or of all they happen to have noticed, is true of all the class. When they are strongly impelled to wish it so, as by appetite, interest, or prejudice, and thus some powerful feeling combines with indolence, it is not wonderful, however deplorable, that a "hasty induction" is the result. In agriculture, or in domestic medicine, all manner of rules are upheld and followed among the masses of men, on the ground of imperfect observation and hasty induction. In books of travel, universal statements are constantly made as to the opinions, usages, and character of a people, which are founded on a very hasty induction, stimulated by prejudice; notable examples appearing in

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* Comp. Whately, p. 102.

† Fleming, Vocab. of Phil. p. 252.

English books about America, in many of our Eastern journals when speaking of the West, and many Northern journals when speaking of the South;* also in the reports of Foreign Missions made by some infidel or irreligious travellers. From the fact that negroes have never been highly civilized, it is confidently inferred by some that they never can be; others observe the gratifying progress in knowledge made in a short time by a few colored people, and at once proclaim that they are naturally a highly intelligent race. Certain choice specimens of what are called "uneducated" ministers, surpass some very poor specimens of the "educated," and this is thought to prove that ministerial education is unnecessary; a half-educated young preacher makes a foolish display of something he learned at college, and this shows that education is injurious. But who could catalogue, or even broadly classify, the instances of hasty or otherwise unwarranted induction, which make up so sadly large a portion of human reasoning? Let us earnestly strive, as a duty to our own minds and to our office as teachers of truth, to guard against this fruitful source of error.

The question what is "a sufficient number of cases" to warrant our drawing a general rule, depends upon the nature of the subject-matter. In regard to physical facts a single example will sometimes suffice. "A chemist who had ascertained, in a single specimen of gold, its capability of combining with mercury, would not think it necessary to try the experiment with several other specimens, but would draw the conclusion concerning those metals universally and with certainty."† But nothing like this applies to social facts, or to moral and religious truth. The observation of a man's whole life, of a neighborhood through many years, or of the entire civilized world for centuries, has often led to false conclusions as to physical phenomena, or as to questions of good government or social welfare. In order to a safe induction, one must not merely aggregate a number of instances; he must analyze and compare them, so as to eliminate what is merely incidental, and ascertain the "material circumstances" in each case.* The more clearly we can discern a causal relation, accounting for the common element, the smaller the number of instances necessary to establish a rule. But the cause must be a real cause, not a mere hypothesis, not a matter having no real connection with the result in question, nor an incidental circumstance. As an example of the last, it is frequently inferred that something found true in several cases of conversion, will be true in all cases; but the question is, whether this is something founded in the essential principles of human nature, or merely the result of peculiar temperament, education, etc.

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* And no doubt, *vice versa.*

† Whately, p. 111.

Aristotle says, "Induction, except in few instances, is not proper to rhetoric." † As the people so commonly reason in this way, it is natural and proper that they who speak to the people should wish to do likewise, and especially that sophistical or inconsiderate speakers should very often introduce hasty inductions, which may be readily and agreeably presented, and will be easily accepted by hearers to whose prejudices they conform. Where a *safe* induction can be briefly stated, it is eminently proper to rhetoric; yet this will happen in comparatively "few instances." Sometimes an induction fully and even formally stated, will be appropriate; such occasions, however, are rare. But in addition to proving by arguments of other kinds, we may quite frequently present examples, cases in point, which will not merely illustrate what we mean, but reinforce the proof by at least a probable induction. And it is in the highest degree important that we should know

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* Comp. Mill's Logic, Book V, chap. 5, § 4.

† Ar. Rhet. II, 20, 9.

now to correct those ten thousand erroneous inductions, whether in the arguments of other public speakers, in newspapers and conversation, or in their own thinking, by which the minds of our hearers are so apt to be misled.

D. Arguments from Analogy.

Analogy is still too often confounded with resemblance, notwithstanding the earnest efforts of Whately and some other writers to confine the term to its original and proper sense. The primary meaning of the word is *proportion*, and in this sense only is it employed in mathematics. It denotes not a resemblance between objects themselves, but a correspondence between their ratios or relations to other objects. The leg of a table does not much resemble the leg of an animal, but they are analogous, because the former sustains in several respects the same relation to a table, that the leg sustains to an animal. The foot of a mountain is analogous to that of a man, though scarcely at all similar. "An egg and a seed are not in themselves alike, but bear a like relation, to the parent bird and to her future nestling on the one hand, and to the old and young plant on the other." * But analogous objects will frequently be similar also, and this fact has helped to obscure to men's minds the distinction, that being sometimes carelessly ascribed to the resemblance which is really due to the analogy. Further, an analogy is often all the more striking from the fact that it exists between objects which in some other respects are utterly unlike. First, then, failing to see clearly the difference between analogy and resemblance, and observing, besides, that the former term was often employed where there is in some respects a great dissimilarity, many persons have fallen into the habit of calling objects analogous which are similar in some respects, but have a recognized difference in others. Mill, in his Logic, puts forward this common use of the term as if it were legitimate, and unfairly employs it for the purpose of throwing discredit upon all arguments from analogy.* Of course an argument from a mere partial resemblance between objects can be worth but little. But very different may be the case where there is a resemblance (sometimes even an identity) in the relation which two objects bear to a third, or to two others, respectively. Understand analogy in this strict and proper sense, and the argument from analogy may have great force. It is exceedingly desirable that good usage should restrict the term to its proper meaning. The point to be guarded is, never to say there is an analogy between objects, unless there is a correspondence (identity or similarity) in their relations to something else, however like or however unlike the objects themselves may be. Men are the slaves of words; and unless the thoughtful can discern, avoid and correct such confusions in the popular use of important terms, reasoning to a popular audience will constantly become increasingly difficult.

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* Whately, p. 115.

It follows that we must carefully avoid the "error of concluding the *things* in question to be *alike*, because they are analogous;" and that it is very unjust, when a man has argued from the *analogy* between two objects, to charge him with having represented them as *similar*. Moreover, the correspondence between the relations of objects which are seen to be analogous, must not be presumed to extend to *all* their relations. Thus, because a just analogy has been discerned between the metropolis of a country, and the heart of the animal body, it has been sometimes contended that its increased size is a disease,—that it may impede some of its most important functions, or even be the cause of its dissolution.† The question is, *in what respects* are the relations between the objects similar?

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* Mill's Logic, Book III, chap. 20, and Book V, chap. 5, § 6.

† Bishop Copleston, in Whately, p. 116, and p. 492 ff.

A large proportion of the metaphors we employ, rest, not upon resemblance, but upon analogy. E. g. "He is the pillar of the State;" "Paris is the heart of France." All mental and spiritual states and operations are expressed by terms borrowed, by analogy, from the physical; all that we know of the future life, by terms derived from analogous objects or relations in this life. The sense of such metaphorical expressions has been in many cases fixed and defined by usage, so that, as commonly employed, they will not mislead; but whenever we begin to reason upon them, great care must be taken lest we extend the analogy to matters which it does not really embrace. So with the terms used to describe the attributes of God, and his relations to his creatures. Thus we call God a Father, and in certain respects Christ reasons from earthly fathers to Him. Yet if we infer from a father's forgiving his child upon repentance, without satisfaction, that our Heavenly Father will and must forgive us upon repentance, without need of an Atonement, we extend the analogy more widely than is warranted. God is a Father, but is also a King, and his government is not a system of imperfect expedients, but must consult the requirements of absolute justice.

Has the argument from analogy any *positive* force? It may certainly afford a *probable* proof of positive truth. When two objects are observed to be analogous in many important respects, it is assuredly more or less probable that they are also analogous in some other respect not observed. But it is very doubtful whether this can in any case be an absolute proof. Many results of induction, as we have seen above, are simply in a high degree probable; and they become certain only when, besides observing that the instances examined are all similar in a certain respect, we can also discern some *cause* of that similarity, which will operate also in the instances not examined. Now the same thing must hold in the case of analogy. If two objects should correspond in all their relations to certain other objects so far as we can examine, and if we were able to discern some *cause* of the correspondence, such as must produce a like correspondence in other relations not examined, then we might infer with certainty that in any of these other relations they do correspond. In many cases of Induction, a cause, or at least an explanation, of the common element can be found. We leave it a question whether the same can ever be done in cases of Analogy. Still, an argument from analogy will often add its force to that of other proofs, and will make a result more or less probable, even where no other proof exists.

But chiefly for negative purposes, in the refutation of objections, is the argument from analogy of frequent and high utility, "like those weapons, which though they cannot kill the enemy, will ward his blows." * Butler, in his immortal work, has with great power refuted objections to natural religion by the analogy of nature, and objections to revealed religion by the analogy of Providence. If men say it would be unjust in God to punish them for violating his law when they did not believe, or did not certainly know, that it was his law, we point them to the fact that this holds of physical laws — that he who takes poison will be killed, even though he did not know, or did not believe, that it was poison. If they object that God could not with propriety make salvation dependent upon belief of the gospel, when there may be some doubt as to whether the gospel is true, we remind them that bodily life is often dependent upon sending for the physician, though there may be very great doubt as to whether he will understand and remedy the disease; we have to risk life upon a probability, or take the consequences. If they object to the doctrine of Original Sin, as incompatible with God's goodness, we point to inherited disease, inherited proclivities to vice, inherited dishonor. And so as to the doctrine of Election. From the great inequalities which exist among men as to native physical powers, intellect, moral character, and the influences which have surrounded their childhood as well as their age, we could not with anything more than probability infer, as a positive proposition, that God would elect some men to be saved, and omit others. As a positive argument it would be weakened by the fact that we cannot be certain of a universal analogy between God's operations in the sphere of creation and providence, and his operations in the sphere of grace; and also by the fact that the widest inequalities of earthly life are slight compared with the difference between salvation and damnation. But when to the doctrine of Election as taught in Scripture men offer the *objection* that it is inconsistent with the Divine justice to make such a distinction, we *refute the objection* by pointing to the immense distinctions which he certainly does make in this life.

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* Campbell, Phil. of Rhet. p. 76.

When examples are *invented* to furnish argument (and not merely explanation, ornament, etc.), it must always be the argument from analogy. It is only necessary that the supposed case should be *probable.* Induction from unreal examples would of course be worthless; but merely probable cases may afford an analogy to the matter in hand which will be in a high degree convincing.*

The analogy of real and of invented examples is sometimes employed not to prove, but merely to explain, or to render interesting.†

Of the four great Varieties of Argument which have now been discussed, the first, argument *a priori,* stands apart as distinct from the rest. All other arguments are divided by Aristotle (followed by Whately, and others) into arguments from *sign*, and arguments from *example*. The most important class of arguments from *sign* are those from *Testimony;* and nearly all arguments from *example* fall either under the head of *Induction* or of *Analogy.*

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* See Whately, p. 129 ff.

† As to the objectionable phrase, the analogy of Faith, see note to chap. 2, § 4.

E. Deduction from established truth.

Every species of argument involves a deduction. But there are many deductions which do not belong to any of the varieties we have been considering—deductions not from sign nor example, not from a cause or necessary truth, but from a general truth, which has been in some way established. What we then do is to show that this truth includes some other, or by its combination with similar established truths leads to some other; and these processes may be repeated, so as to produce a series. Much of our reasoning is obviously of this character. We do not stop with the truth furnished by cause, sign, or example, but proceed to develop its contents, or combine it with other truths and show the result. And besides what is common to all men, the reasoning of preachers possesses a large element of this kind, in its constant deductions or "inferences" from the teachings of Scripture.

Now such deductions must be made with great care. The reply often heard in conversational discussion, "Ah, but that is only an inference of yours," shows the common feeling as to the danger that our inferences will be far less certain than the truths from which we infer. There is obviously need for great care that the deduction shall be strictly logical. But another thing is important. In Political Economy, it is found that the results deduced by abstract reasoning from general principles must at every step be compared with facts, or they will at length be found to have gone astray from actual truth. And similarly in religious reasoning. We can very seldom take a general truth and make a series of deductions from it as is done in Geometry, and feel safe as to the results.

We must constantly compare with the facts of existence, and with the teachings of Scripture. The love of purely abstract reasoning leads many minds astray as to religious truth. The idea of establishing some truth of religion by "a perfect demonstration" is commonly delusive. Human life is not really controlled by demonstrated truth, as to this world or the next. We must be content with those practical certainties which the conditions of existence allow us to attain; and while constantly drawing inferences, as it is right we should do, must be content to compare them with fact and Scripture, to make sure that they are correct.

"Pure reasoning handles ideas and not facts. It is a sort of geometry of intellectual space. This geometry, however, is less certain than the other, the import of signs here being less invariable. Hence the necessity of not coursing entirely through the void, and of descending often to the earth, to set our feet on facts. Otherwise, we run the risk of proving too much, and losing, at length, the sense of reality. At the end of the most sound reasonings, when the reason of the hearer seems to be overcome, something more intimate than logic rises up within him, and protests against your conclusions."*

F. Certain *forms* of Argument.

We have hitherto considered the principal varieties of argument as to their essential nature. But several of the *forms* which arguments, whatever be their material and character, often assume, would seem to call for mention and explanation.

The argument *a fortiori* (from stronger grounds), shows that something is true in a less probable case, real or supposed, and then insists that much more certainly must it be true in a more probable case. This form of argument is a favorite one with orators, and is very often found in the teachings of our Lord and the apostles. "If ye, then being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father," etc. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!" "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23 : 31.) "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8 : 32.) "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord (i. e. the Lord Jesus), and was confirmed unto us," etc. (Heb. 2 : 2–4.) "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God! And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4 : 17, 18.) * These are but a few examples out of many. They should impress us with the suitableness of such arguments in addressing the popular mind.

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* Vinet, p. 174–5.

The argument *from Progressive Approach* has been pointed out and well illustrated by Whately. In arguing the being of a God from the general consent of mankind, we observe that *in proportion as* men have become cultivated and civilized, their ideas of the unity and moral excellence of the Deity have risen higher; that there is a *progressive tendency* towards the most exalted Monotheism, which is hence inferred to be true. Or as regards religious tolerance: "In every age and country, as a general rule, tolerant principles have (however imperfectly) gained ground wherever scriptural knowledge has gained ground.

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* See Vinet, p. 193–6.

And a presumption is thus afforded that a still further advance of the one would lead to a corresponding advance in the other."*

The *dilemma* presents two assumptions, of such a character that one or the other must be true, and yet whichever is considered true, there will follow the result proposed. Such was Gamaliel's argument (Acts 5 : 38–9): "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." It must be either from men or from God, and in either case the conclusion would be, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone."† The dilemma is most commonly, but not exclusively employed for the purpose of refutation.

In like manner, the *reductio ad absurdum* (reduction to an absurdity) is most frequently, but not always used for refutation.‡ When it is argued that we ought not to send the gospel to the heathen, because if they reject it, their guilt and doom will be so much aggravated, we answer that upon that principle, the gospel ought not to be preached to the destitute at home, nor to any one, and it is a pity there ever was a gospel. The principle which necessarily leads to such an absurdity, must be in itself erroneous.

The argument *ex concesso*, from something conceded by the opponent, or known to be admitted by the persons addressed, may be employed not only for refutation, but also to establish positive truth, when we are satisfied that the thing admitted is really true.

The argument *ad hominem* is *legitimately* employed only in refutation, and will be explained under that head.||

Arguments of different kinds, as to nature or form, will often be *combined* in one complex argument.

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* Whately, p. 104–9.

† We are not here inquiring whether Gamaliel's assumptions are correct.

‡ Comp. above, § 1 3.

|| See below, § 8

Different speakers will prefer one or another species of argument according to their mental constitution and other circumstances, and a man will be apt to manage best that which he prefers. But this preference should never become exclusive, or it will make the mind one-sided. Besides, it is necessary to consider what species of argument will best suit the mental constitution, intelligence and tastes of the audience. We should therefore habitually seek to draw arguments from a variety of sources, and throw them into various forms.

§ 3. REFUTATION.

(1.) It is frequently a sufficient refutation of error to prove the opposite truth; and this is then greatly to be preferred. The error, without mention, just falls away, and is thought of no more. But such a course will not always suffice. The arguments of adversaries must often be met, and objections to the truth must still oftener be removed. In controversial sermons, though the preacher may have no actual antagonist, yet there are arguments well known to be used in favor of a different view, and which he must refute; "that he may be able with the sound teaching both to exhort, and to refute the gainsayers. For there are many unruly vain talkers and deceivers . . . . . whose mouths must be stopped."* Right feelings towards those who are in error will render this necessary task a painful one. But naturally, all men take pleasure in conflict. "We are more inclined to refute than to prove, to destroy than to build up. It is more easy, more flattering to self-love, more in accordance with our natural passions. Every one is eloquent in anger; love and peace seldom make men eloquent."† The audience, too, are thus readily aroused. Everybody will run to see a fight. And he who assumes the character of a fearless defender of unpopular doctrines, a martyr-spirit, readily gains from the unthinking a species of sympathy and admiration. These things being so, we must carefully guard against the temptation to assail others where it is not really necessary. We must keep uppermost in our minds the desire to establish truth, and let refutation be strictly and manifestly subordinate.*

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* Tit. 1: 9-11.

† Vinet, p. 177.

But apart from controversy, and where we have no real antagonist, there will be, in preaching, very frequent occasion for refuting objections to the truth we advocate. It is better, whenever consistent with the known facts, to treat these as the objections, not of a caviller, but of an honest inquirer. Instead of assailing the supposed objector and attempting to conquer him, let us approach him kindly and seek to win him to the truth.

(2.) In moral reasoning, one cannot always, as in Geometry, give a complete refutation of all objections. Sometimes they are too weak to be refuted. He who does not at once see their absurdity or nothingness, can scarcely be made to see it at all. You pierce the phantom through and through with your sword, but there it stands. Or you perceive that the objection is really a pretence or a delusion on the part of men who are opposed to the truth on grounds they do not state — perhaps the last refuge of one determined not to yield. Alas! for the frequency with which we are reminded that

"A man convinced against his will
Is of the same opinion still."

Besides, there are objections to everything. Whately was fond of quoting a saying of Dr. Johnson, "There are objections to a plenum and objections to a vacuum; yet one or the other must be true." The reason for believing any proposition in moral truth consists of the arguments in favor of it, *minus* the objections, refuted as far as practicable. "The objection perhaps may be unanswerable, and yet may safely be allowed, if it can be shown that more and weightier objections lie against every other supposition. This is a most important caution for those who are studying the Evidences of Religion. Let the opposer of them be called on, instead of confining himself to detached cavils, and saying 'how do you answer this?' and 'how do you explain that?' to frame some consistent hypothesis to account for the introduction of Christianity by human means; and then to consider whether there are more or fewer difficulties in his hypothesis than in the other." *

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* Comp. on Polemical Subjects, chap. 8, § 2.

It follows that we must not waste time in the refutation of trifling objections; nor mention objections which would never trouble the minds of the hearers, and which furnish no sufficient ground for doubting the truth; nor attempt to refute objections unless we can do so satisfactorily. It is sometimes better to say, "Well, that is an objection to my proposition, I grant; but then the proposition must be true, as the arguments in favor of it show." If the objections, or the arguments for a contradictory proposition, are really convincing, it is the manifest duty of one who loves truth, and would seem especially incumbent on a preacher, to acknowledge himself convinced, and so far as this matter goes, to change his ground.

(3.) When objections are discussed, they should be stated in full force. This is simply just, and is also obviously good policy. "Express it precisely as you believe it to be in the hearer's mind, so that, listening to your exposition of it, he may say to himself, 'That is exactly my objection; that is precisely my difficulty, and I should wish very much to hear how the preacher will clear it up.' " *

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* Whately, p 188. Comp. above, on Testimony, § 2, B.

(4.) Refutation, whether of an erroneous proposition, or of an objection to the truth, will be accomplished by showing either that the terms are ambiguous, the premises false, the reasoning unsound, or the conclusion irrelevant. Sometimes that which is presented as an objection may be very true, but may not really conflict with the proposition under consideration.

" In all cases in which it seems necessary, we must divide the difficulty. Refutation ordinarily gains by a division of the objection. It is seldom that one reply alone can demolish directly with a single stroke, all parts of the error. . . . . The hearer sees you conquer many times in succession; he perceives that there are many errors on the other side, and many truths on yours." †

" We must know how to take the offensive, and, if possible, turn the objection into a proof. Prolonging the defensive, enfeebles us; and to defend ourselves to advantage, we must make the attack. Great preachers have always observed this rule. In the error which we decompose or attack, we should find the very germs of truth." ‡ The lamented Addison Alexander, in his sermons and commentaries, exhibits remarkable skill in thus turning objections into proof.

(5.) Refutation of an error is sometimes strengthened by showing how the error may have originated. Thus an opposer of Infant Baptism, after disposing of such passages from the New Testament as may have been presented in proof of it, breaks the force of any argument derived from its present and long-continued existence, by pointing out how it may have arisen in the second or third century.

(6.) It is often advantageous to have recourse to *indirect* refutation. The principal species of this, ***reductio ad***

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* Potter's Sacred Eloquence, p. 179. † Vinet, p. 179. ‡ Ib.

absurdum, has been already discussed.* The argument *ad hominem*, 'to the man,' can scarcely ever be properly employed to establish positive truth. An appeal to the hearer's peculiar opinions, position, or mode of reasoning, in order to make him believe something, is almost necessarily improper. But in refutation, in dealing with those unreasonable objectors "whose mouths must be stopped," it is perfectly appropriate and may be highly effective. Such is our Lord's argument in Matt. 12 : 27, "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" He is not saying that the disciples of the Pharisees really do cast out demons, but simply shutting their mouths by an argument *ad hominem*. So likewise in 1 Cor. 15 : 29, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for them?" the apostle silences certain objectors to the resurrection of the dead by pointing to the superstitious practice encouraged by them, of baptizing living persons in behalf of those who had died unbaptized, — a practice known to have existed in the next century. He does not present this as an argument to prove the doctrine of the resurrection true, but simply as an *ad hominem* argument to stop the mouths of unreasonable opponents And his own condemnation of the superstitious practice need not be stated, for at Corinth it would be well understood. This is one of the points to be guarded in using the form of argument in question; we must not seem to approve the position or practice to which we appeal. We must also take pains to use the argument fairly. "It does not follow from a man's having been of a different opinion formerly, that he is wrong in thinking as he now does. A man is often reproached for making progress, when reproached with inconsistency." †

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* See above, § 2, F.

† Vinet, p. 185. See his whole discussion, p. 183–6.

It is sometimes convenient to show that an opponent's premise is wrong, by showing that it "proves too much," i. e. "that it proves, besides the conclusion drawn, another, which is manifestly inadmissible." *

Irony, as a means of making an opponent or an error ridiculous, is certainly allowable in serious discourse, for we have a famous example in Elijah's address to the priests of Baal.† It is employed with great effect against certain modern forms of infidelity, in Rogers' Eclipse of Faith. Though it be not true that "ridicule is the test of truth," it is certainly a very effective means of refuting pretentious falsehood. If a serious subject is involved, the persons refuted by means of irony will of course complain loudly that it is irreverent, and some good people may think likewise; but this only makes it proper to be careful that we do not say anything which really does make a serious subject ridiculous. It is obvious that an ironical passage in a sermon ought, save in very peculiar cases, to be quite brief.‡

Akin to the indirect method of refutation, is a certain sophistical method, "consisting in counter-objections urged against something else which is taken for granted to be, though it is not, the only alternative. . . . . It is thus that a man commonly replies to the censure passed on any vice he is addicted to, by representing some other vice as worse; e. g. if he is blamed for being a sot, he dilates on the greater enormity of being a thief; as if there were any need he should be either." || So likewise when we object to the popular dancing, there are those who reply that it would be greatly worse to spend the time in talking scandal.

(7.) Too elaborate and vehement refutation may sometimes defeat its own design. Not only because it arouses

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* Whately, p. 182.

† 1 Kings, 18 : 27.

‡ Comp. Whately, p 183–7.

|| Whately, p 188–9.

deep-seated prejudices, but because, by overwhelming and utterly crushing an error, we may make persons unwilling to acknowledge that an opinion they have entertained is so preposterous, and therefore unwilling to admit that the refutation is just.* Thus in condemning the "accommodation" of texts, if one grows indignant, and declares the practice to be inexpressibly foolish and wicked, some of those who have indulged in it are repelled, and refuse to acknowledge that it is wrong at all.

(8.) A successful refutation is apt to carry the sympathies of the hearers, as men usually sympathize with the victorious. And influenced by this feeling, they often overestimate the extent of the refutation. All the arguments advanced in favor of a proposition may have been refuted, and yet the proposition may be true, on grounds not mentioned. Still, if the advocates of a view are able men, it is natural to suppose that they have not omitted the only convincing arguments on their side, and so there is not here any great danger of error. But in another way there is very great danger. When the opponent readily and overwhelmingly refutes *some* of the arguments presented, and then with a lofty carelessness remarks that in like manner all the rest could be refuted if it were worth while the great mass of men will believe it to be even so, and regard him as triumphant. Hence it is of great importance not to employ doubtful proofs, and in presenting those which afford only a probability or a presumption to point out distinctly that such is the case. Otherwise the sophistical adversary will refute the weak proofs, or show that the merely probable ones establish nothing, and then if he does not assert, will leave it to be taken for granted, that our other proofs are of the same character.

This has often happened with reference to the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. Every passage which at all appears to teach the doctrine being adduced, the Socinian can show that many of them are exceedingly doubtful, and many others *can* be differently understood, until unthinking persons would suppose that he had completely destroyed the argument, or reduced it to but a few passages. Now if one wishes a climax, he may begin by showing that a great number of passages seem to involve the doctrine, and that many others make it extremely probable, and then produce some that are conclusive. But it is often better, especially in a sermon, to present a few strong proofs, and then point out in general that this doctrine lies everywhere on the surface of the New Testament, so that the common reader naturally gets the idea; nay, that it pervades the whole warp and woof of New Testament teaching, which would be torn to fragments in removing it.* So in all other discourses upon topics involving much controversy. Take no ground which you cannot hold. It may look very brave to assume an advanced position, but if you are flanked out of it there will be a great shout of triumph. And distinguish carefully between proofs which yield a presumption — for that purpose they are very useful — and those which are regarded as conclusive. Even where there is no controversy, duty to one's own mind and to the mind of his hearers, and devotion to the truth, require that no greater stress should ever seem to be laid on any argument than it deserves. "One false or foolish proof lays the whole discourse open to suspicion; it inspires our hearers with a contempt for ourselves and our doctrine, and it is frequently the only part which they retain and of which they speak." †

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* Comp. Whately, p. 193–8.

In consequence of the ignorance, the slothfulness, the prejudices, and the frequent deceitfulness of men, human reasoning greatly abounds in Fallacies. We must learn to avoid these ourselves, and to detect and expose them in others. For this purpose it is especially important to study systems of Logic, as training the mind to distinguish between sound and fallacious reasoning. It is painful when one *feels* that there is something wrong in an argument, but cannot see what; or when he sees it himself, but cannot explain the fallacy to others. This explanation, it may be remarked, is often best made by constructing a similar argument out of matter more familiar to the common mind.*

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* With reference to this important doctrine the suggestion may be repeated, that the mode of discussion proper to a theological treatise often requires great modification in a popular discourse.

† Potter, Sac. Eloq. p. 151.

§ 4. ORDER OF ARGUMENTS.

The order of arguments is scarcely less important than their individual force. The superiority of an army to a mob is hardly greater than the advantage of a well-arranged discourse over a mere mass of scattered thoughts. The question what arrangement is to be preferred in any particular case, must depend upon a variety of circumstances. Here, as everywhere in Rhetoric, we can only lay down rules as to what is generally best.†

It is obvious that the several distinct arguments should be kept separate. But in the practice of inexperienced reasoners it is not uncommon to see portions of two different arguments combined, and two parts of the same argument separated by the interposition of other matter.

The consideration which must principally determine the order of arguments is their natural relation to each other "Some proofs are explained by others, which must be previously exhibited in order to the full effect of the reason ing. Some proofs presuppose others. Some, once more, have great weight if preceded by certain others, and are of little moment unless preceded by them." *

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* Mill's discussion of Fallacies, Logic, Book V, contains much that is quite valuable. He thinks that the commonest of all fallacies is *petitio principii* ("begging the question").

† The larger topic of the Arrangement of a Sermon will be discussed below, in Part II.

Proofs which spring from the very nature of the proposition should commonly come first, because the exhibition of these will involve a full explanation of the proposition, and "after such an explanation the relevance and force of every other proof will be more clearly seen." †

Arguments *a priori* generally precede others, as they prepare the mind more readily to receive the *a posteriori* proofs. Thus after presenting the *a priori* probability that a revelation would be given to man, and further, that such a revelation would be accompanied by miracles, we may gain a hearing for the testimony that miracles have been wrought, and in connection with them a revelation has been given. Here the testimony falls in with an antecedent probability. But if we first bring forward the testimony that miracles have taken place, "as insulated occurrences, without any known or conceivable purpose," it has to encounter a powerful antecedent probability *against* miracles. ‡ There are cases, however, in which it is better to present first some more tangible and popular proof of a proposition, as from testimony or from example, and then show that this need not surprise us when we look at certain *a priori* considerations.

It is usually best, where nothing forbids, to begin with the weakest arguments used and end with the strongest, thus forming a *climax*, the power of which is well understood.

But we must sometimes depart from the order which would be fixed by the natural dependence of the arguments upon each other, because of the known disposition of the hearers. If they are unfriendly to our views, it is well to begin with one or more strong arguments, well suited to their minds so as to command respect and secure attention. We may next, according to the precept of the ancient rhetoricians, throw in the less important matter, and close with the strongest of all, for the sake of the final impression; or, beginning with the strongest arguments, and adding less important but confirmatory considerations, we may at the close recapitulate in the reverse order, and thus gain the effect of a climax.*

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* Day, p. 153. † Day, p. 154. ‡ See Whately, p. 169–70.

What position shall be occupied by arguments from *Scripture*, relatively to those drawn from reason, experience, etc.? To begin, as is not unfrequently done, with plain proofs from Scripture, and then add further proofs from reason, history, common experience and the like, seems derogatory to the authority of God's Word. When a thing has been proven by that Word, then for the preacher the question is settled; he cannot admit, he must not seem to admit, that there is any need of further argument. So far, then, it would appear that Scripture proofs should regularly follow others. But there will be cases in which this is awkward; and besides, to some of the hearers proofs from reason may be more convincing, or proofs from experience more impressive, than the plainest declarations of the Bible. To meet these conditions we may begin with the Scripture teachings, and then observe that here, as in fact everywhere, reason and experience are in harmony with the Bible, and so proceed to the arguments from those sources. In this way we conform to the hearer's mode of thinking and feeling, and end with that which will make the strongest impression on him, without abandoning our own position as to the supremacy of Scripture—a position which even infidels will feel that the preacher himself ought to maintain.† To hold firmly our own ground, and yet put ourselves as far as possible in sympathy with the persons we would win, is a thing often demanded in preaching, and an achievement worthy of much thoughtful effort.

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* Comp. Whately, p. 201.

† Comp. one of the opening paragraphs of this chapter

In what part of a discourse shall the refutation of *objections* be placed? "When an objection lies against the view advanced in a certain part of the sermon, it should obviously, for the efficiency of that part, be disposed of, though as briefly as possible, before passing to another point." * If objections lie against the general sentiment of the sermon, and they can be refuted independently of the discussion, and briefly, it is advantageous to clear them out of the way before entering upon our line of argument. Where the refutation depends upon our argument, or would occupy much time, it must be postponed to the close; and in that case, if some of the objections would be likely to occur at once to the hearer's mind, and interfere, as we proceed, with the effect of our arguments, it is well to intimate at the outset that we propose, before concluding, to notice some objections.

"The hint may here be of some utility, that when a controverted position is to be defended, an advantage may be gained by stating, previously to entering on the proof, one or two of the most weighty objections against the opposite views. Objectors may thus become sensible of difficulties which they had not contemplated, and many may be induced to hear with greater candor arguments in favor of the position; those who admit the point under discussion may receive additional confirmation; and those who are indifferent may be led to regard the subject as more important than they had supposed." †

In a formal public discussion, it is a very common artifice for the person who speaks first to insist that his antagonist shall follow the order of topics which he has laid down. In the famous contest as to the crown, Æschines attempted this; and so important did Demosthenes regard the matter, that he begins his speech with a solemn appeal to the judges that they shall, as really required by their oath of impartiality, allow each of the disputants to pursue the order he may choose.*

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* Ripley, Sac. Rhet. p. 81.

† Ripley, p. 82.

§ 5. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS AS TO ARGUMENT.

In concluding the subject of Arguments, it is proper to throw together a few practical hints, though some of them are indirectly involved in statements heretofore made.†

(1.) Do not undertake to prove anything unless you are sure it is true, and satisfied that you can prove it.

(2.) Let your argument start from something which the persons addressed will fully acknowledge. This is obviously important, but is often neglected.

(3.) Use arguments intelligible to your hearers, and likely to make an impression on their minds. This must be the rule, though individual hearers may have so low a grade of intelligence that we cannot uniformly keep within their reach, and though particular arguments not intelligible even to the majority may sometimes be used, if with the few they would be very effective, and if they take up but little time. But it is a not uncommon thing to see preachers present whole trains of abstract or otherwise unfamiliar argument, which the great mass of their hearers cannot at all comprehend, and but very few can follow throughout. The preacher, of all men, should study the common mind, and seek fully to understand, not only its forms of expression, but, what is still more important, its ways of thinking. He should strive to put himself in the position of his hearers, and consider how this or that argument will appear from their point of view.‡ "For this is the reason why uneducated men have more power of persuasion among the rabble than the educated have, just as the poets say [Euripides has such a saying] that the uneducated are in the estimation of the rabble finer speakers. For the one class say what is matter of common knowledge and of a general character; but the others speak from their own knowledge, and say the things that lie close to their hearers." * How true it is now of many able and learned preachers that they can speak only of generalities, belonging to the common stock of human knowledge, and know not how to fall in with the modes of thought which are familiar and agreeable to the masses. That this last can be done without the sacrifice of truly profound thought or the violation of refined taste, has been shown by some ministers of every age and country, and most conspicuously by that Great Teacher of whom it was said — O exalted eulogium! — "the common people heard him gladly."

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* As to the general conduct of refutation, see above, § 3.

† Comp. particularly the introductory paragraphs of this chapter

‡ In these respects a good deal may be learned from the critical observation of able "stump-speakers," and jury-lawyers.

(4.) In general, rely mainly on Scripture arguments, and prefer those which are plain and unquestionable When we engage in religious controversy before a popular audience, we shall usually do well to say but little concerning that great mass of learned matter about which the people cannot personally judge, and rely mainly on common-sense views of the plain teachings of Scripture. But if we are superior to the petty vanity of displaying a cheap erudition, we often find it too hard to work out a common-sense view, and too easy to appropriate the piles of material which the learned have left us. It is to be feared that but a small proportion of controversial sermons are in this respect well suited to the popular mind. And apart from controversy, let us use chiefly arguments from Scripture. This is common ground between us and our hearers. In general, no other arguments can come so appropriately from us,

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* Aristotle, Rhet. II, 22, 3.

or be so effective with the people. And in the general principles, the many special precepts, and the immense number of examples, good and evil, to be found in the Bible, we have a boundless store of material for argument.*

(5.) Do not try to say everything, but select a suitable number of the most available arguments. It is true that sometimes the judicious combination of many comparatively slight arguments may have a great effect. "Singly they are light," says Quintilian, "but taken together they do hurt, though not as by a thunderbolt, yet as by hail."† Still, it is a very common fault to multiply arguments to excess. With sore travail of the mind the preacher has brought all these into existence, and surveying them with parental affection, he thinks each of them too good to be abandoned. But how many thousand men was it that Gideon dismissed that he might conquer with three hundred? Where there are so many arguments, either the discourse must be excessively long, or they must be too hurriedly presented. "A plain hearer, who listens to a rapid succession of various proofs, especially if they are novel and incongruous, is much in the condition of a rustic stranger, who is hurried through the streets of a crowded city, where a thousand objects strike his eye, not one of which leaves any distinct and permanent impression on his mind."‡ Where it is really necessary to present many arguments, let them be skilfully grouped, and let the more obvious be briefly stated, in order to pause and dwell upon those which demand special attention.

(6.) Avoid formality. Have the reality of argument, but as little as possible of its merely technical forms and phrases.

(7.) As to the style of Argument, the chief requisites are of course clearness, precision, and force. But a simple elegance is usually compatible with these. And where the subject is exalted and inspiring, and the speaker's whole soul is on fire, some great thunderbolt of argument may blaze with an overpowering splendor.*

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* Comp Gresley on Preaching, Letter VIII.

† Quint. V, 12, 5. ‡ Porter's Hom., Lect. XIII.

CHAPTER VII.

ILLUSTRATION.

§ 1. VARIOUS USES OF ILLUSTRATION. § 2. SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATION, VIZ. OBSERVATION, PURE INVENTION, SCIENCE, HISTORY, LITERATURE AND ART, SCRIPTURE. § 3. CAUTIONS AS TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF ILLUSTRATION.

§ 1. VARIOUS USES OF ILLUSTRATION.

TO illustrate, according to the etymology, is to throw light (or lustre) upon a subject; and hence illustration would strictly include only explanation and ornament. But that which explains may also contain a proof by analogy; or that which adorns a subject may at the same time connect with it pathetic associations. Accordingly, what we call illustrations are used to explain, to prove, to adorn, and to render impressive.

Strictly speaking, one would not call illustration a distinct class of the materials of discourse. As a means of explaining, proving, or awakening emotion, it would fall under the heads of Explanation, Argument, and Application;† as a means of adornment, it would belong to Elegance of Style.‡ But as the same illustration often subserves different ends, and as the proper handling of illustrations is a matter of great practical importance, it seems best to give the subject a separate discussion.

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* Comp. Quint. V, 14, 33.

† Discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 8; comp. at the beginning of chap. 5.

‡ Part III, chap. 4.

(1.) Perhaps the principal use of illustrations is to *explain*. This they do either by presenting an example of the matter in hand, a case in point (Exemplification),* or by presenting something similar or analogous to it, which will make the matter plain.

(2.) But illustrations are also very frequently employed to *prove*. This is done in some rare cases by presenting an example which warrants an Induction; † commonly, it is an argument from Analogy. ‡ In Romans, chap. 6 and 7, the apostle introduces three illustrations, as showing the absurdity of supposing that justification by faith will encourage to sin: believers are *dead* to sin, and risen to another life; they have ceased to be the *slaves* of sin, and become the slaves (so to speak) of holiness, of God; they have ceased to be *married* to the law, and are married to a new husband, Christ, to whom they must now bear fruit. Each of these is not merely explanatory of the believer's position, but involves an argument from analogy. So with the olive-tree in chap. 11. We have heretofore seen that arguments from analogy are most frequently and most safely employed in refutation; and that when used to establish positive truth, they demand very great care, lest we deceive ourselves and others.

The fact that an illustration may furnish proof *at the same time* that it serves for explanation, ornament, etc., calls for special attention. Some analogy may be so ornamental, so amusing, or pathetic, as to make us overlook the fact that it has of right an argumentative force also; and some comparison may be so beautiful an ornament as to be allowed force in the way of proof when in reality it is a mere simile founded on resemblance, and presents no true analogy, and thus no argument.* We should look closely at illustrations employed for other purposes, and see whether they also contain an argument.

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* Comp. chap. 5, § 2.

† Comp. chap. 6, § 2, C.

‡ Comp. chap. 6, § 2, D.

(3.) Illustrations are valuable as an ornament. Their use for this purpose, as to kind and amount, must be governed by the general principles which pertain to Elegance of Style.† Those who find themselves much inclined to the use of ornamental illustration, should exercise a rigorous self-control, and so cultivate their taste that it will discard all but the genuinely beautiful. Those whose style is barren of such ornament should seek after it, not by tying on worn and faded artificial flowers, but by encouraging the subject to blossom, if that be at all its nature.

(4.) Finally, they frequently serve to render a subject impressive, by exciting some kindred or preparatory emotion. Thus in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the natural pathos of the story itself touches the heart, and prepares it to be all the more impressed by the thought of God's readiness to welcome the returning sinner. Most preachers use illustrations very freely for this purpose. The story or description may have some value for explanation, proof, or ornament, but their chief object in employing it is to excite the feelings. This is lawful and useful, provided the occasion be seized to plant in the softened soil the seeds of divine truth. But we sometimes hear stories told, and at great length, which purport to be illustrations of sacred truth, and yet have no other effect, and to all appearance no other design, than to excite a transient and aimless emotion.‡

The importance of illustration in preaching is beyond expression. In numerous cases it is our best means of explaining religious truth, and often to the popular mind our only means of proving it. Ornament, too, has its legitimate place in preaching, and whatever will help us to move the hard hearts of men is unspeakably valuable. Besides, for whatever purpose illustration may be specially employed, it often causes the truth to be remembered. Sometimes, indeed, even where its force as an explanation or proof was not at first fully apprehended, the illustration, particularly if it be a narrative, is retained in the mind until subsequent instruction or experience brings out the meaning. Such was frequently the case with the first hearers of our Lord's Parables. In preaching to children, and to the great mass of adults, illustration is simply indispensable, if we would either interest, instruct or impress them; while good illustration is always acceptable and useful to hearers of the highest talent and culture. The example of our Lord decides the whole question; and the illustrations which so abound in the records of his preaching ought to be heedfully studied by every preacher, as to their source, their aim, their style, and their relation to the other elements of his teaching. Among the Christian preachers of different ages who have been most remarkable for affluence and felicity of illustration, there may be mentioned Chrysostom, Jeremy Taylor, Christmas Evans, Chalmers, Spurgeon and Beecher.*

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* Comp. Whately, p. 164–6.

† See part III, chap 4.

‡ Comp. on Application, in the next chapter.

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* Of works discussing the subject of Illustration, see Dowling's Power of Illustration, New York, Sheldon & Co. In Trumbull's Children in the Temple, 1869, there are good remarks on the subject (p. 263–70), with the mention of Groser's Illustrative Teaching, London S. S. Union, and Freeman's Use of Illustration in S. S. Teaching, New York, Carlton & Porter. Good thoughts may be found in Papers on Preaching, by a Wykehamist, London, 1861 chap. 6 and 7. Gresley (Letter X) and Hood (Lecture VIII) present some things that are valuable

§ 2. SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATION.

Illustration of religious truth may be drawn from the whole realm of existence and of conception. It might seem idle to make any classification of the sources, but there are two reasons for doing so. The preacher may thereby be stimulated to seek such materials in directions which he has comparatively neglected, and the attempt at classification will furnish the occasion for some practical remarks in passing.

(1.) Observation. It is pre-eminently important that the teacher of religion should be a close observer; partly that he may know how to adapt religious instruction to the real character of his hearers, and the actual conditions of their life, but also that he may be able to draw from that inexhaustible store of illustration which lies everywhere open to the man who has eyes to see and ears to hear.

Nature teems with analogies to moral truth; and we should not merely accept those which force themselves on our attention, but should be constantly searching for them. Besides those analogies which are embodied in our familiar metaphors, and those which belong to the common stock of illustration, there are others, almost without number, which every thoughtful observer may perceive for himself; and here, as elsewhere, what is even relatively original has thereby an augmented power. The writings of John Foster are particularly rich in such analogies, and his Memoir shows that he habitually sought for them, and systematically recorded all that he found. Several of our Lord's most impressive illustrations are drawn from his own close observation of nature; as, for example, the lily, the mustard-seed, the birds. And notice that although these are all so stated as to be very beautiful, he employs them for higher ends, for explanation or for argument. There is here an important lesson, for preachers who derive illustration from nature are too apt to follow the poets in making it chiefly ornamental.*

A still richer field, if possible, is *human life*, with all its social relations and varied callings and pursuits, its business usages, mechanical processes, etc., and with all its changing experiences. Here a man's personal experience will blend with his observation of others. And he who really and thoughtfully observes life, spreading in its immense variety all around, and embracing, too, the world within us, can surely never be at a loss for illustration. Chrysostom, though somewhat ascetical in his views, and though a diligent student, overflows with allusions to real life. Beecher, who has lived for years in the midst of a continent and a nation condensed within a few square miles, shows that he has diligently carried out the lesson which he declares himself to have learned from Ruskin, to "keep his eyes and ears open." He has been watching the ships and the sailors, has acquainted himself with the customs, good and bad, of commercial life, has curiously inspected a great variety of mechanical processes, has often visited his farm and closely observed agricultural operations and the various phases of rural life, has been constantly seeing and hearing what occurred in his home and in other homes he visited, has supplemented his own observation by inquiring of others as to all the manifold good and evil of the great world that surges around him, and everywhere and always has been asking himself, till that has become the fixed habit of his mind, what is this like? what will this illustrate? Hence the boundless variety, and the sparkling freshness, of his illustrations, and these form the chief element of his power as a preacher. Spurgeon, though not equal to Beecher in this respect, and though accustomed to draw much from his reading, has been a close observer too in many and various directions.

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* Comp on Imagination Part III, chap. 5

It should not be forgotten that much of the choicest illustration is derived from the commonest pursuits and the most familiar experiences of life, and a man may excel in this respect without living in New York or London. The great mass of our Lord's illustrations are drawn from ordinary human life. Of agricultural operations, we find reference to sowing wheat and various circumstances which help or hinder its growth, to harvesting, winnowing and putting in barns, to the management of fig-trees and vineyards, and to bottling the wine. In domestic affairs, he speaks of building houses, various duties of servants and stewards, leavening bread, baking, and borrowing loaves late at night, of dogs under the table, patching clothes, and their exposure to moth, lighting lamps, and sweeping the house. As to trade, etc., he mentions the purchase of costly pearls, finding hid treasure, money intrusted to servants as capital, lending on interest, creditors and debtors, imprisonment for debt, and tax-gatherers. Among social relations, he tells of feasts, weddings and bridal processions, the judge and the widow who had been wronged, the rich man and the beggar, the good Samaritan. Of political affairs, he alludes to kings going to war, and the parable of the ten pounds (Luke 19 : 11 ff.) corresponds in every particular to the history of Archelaus in our Lord's childhood. The Prodigal Son is a series of the most beautiful pictures of real life. And who can think without emotion of Jesus standing in some market-place, and watching children at their sports, from which he afterwards drew a striking illustration? All these form but a part of the illustrative material which, in our brief records of his teaching, we find him deriving from the observation of human life, and in nearly every case from matters familiar to all. The lesson is obvious, but it should be pondered long.

The observation of *children* is particularly profitable tc a religious teacher. They reveal much of human nature, and their words and ways are usually interesting to adults. But let us never repeat a child's striking sayings in its own presence, nor in any wise flatter children as preachers sometimes do. The recollections of one's own childhood grow increasingly interesting as life advances; but we must be careful not to exaggerate and glorify those recollections in employing them, not to fall into egotism, nor to imagine that these perhaps trifling matters will be sure to interest others as much as ourselves.

Narrations of actual *experience* of the religious life, whether our own or that of others known to us, are apt to be generally interesting, and will often, as cases in point, furnish admirable illustration. The great revival preachers usually have a multitude of such narratives, drawn from their observation at other places, and they often use them with great effect. This is one secret of the power possessed by some comparatively ignorant preachers in secluded districts. They tell their own experience freely, and do not shrink from mentioning persons even in an adjoining neighborhood, whose case they can make instructive. And in general, from their very ignorance, they must find all their illustration in matters which their hearers are well acquainted with, and can fully appreciate. Spurgeon is very fond of deriving illustration from cases met with in his pastoral labors.*

(2.) Pure invention. It is perfectly lawful to invent an illustration, even in the form of a story, provided that it possesses verisimilitude, and provided that we either show it to be imaginary, or let nothing depend upon the idea that it is real. It seems almost certain that some of our Lord's Parables are in this sense fictitious. It is shown, in one case, by the very form of the expression, "The sower went forth to sow." When we use imagined illustration as affording an *argument*, great care must be taken to make it fair. It is very common for controversial speakers or writers to "suppose a case," and suppose it of such a kind as just to suit their purpose, without due regard to fairness. "If lions were the sculptors, the lion would be uppermost." Imagined illustrations for explanation or ornament are frequently too formal or elaborate. "As when some giant oak," etc. etc. "Suppose there were a man . . . . . and suppose . . . . . and suppose," etc. We all know how such things are done.

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* Comp. on Experimental Subjects, chap. 3, § 4

(3.) Science. Besides what is derived from our own observation of nature and of human life, there is an immense fund of illustration in Science, which, collecting the results of a far wider observation, classifies and seeks to explain them. With the vast growth of Physical Science in our day, and the extensive diffusion of some knowledge of its leading departments, it becomes increasingly appropriate that preachers should draw illustration from that source. In this way, too, they will most effectually counteract the efforts of some infidel men of science, and some unwise teachers of religion, to bring Christianity and Science into an appearance of hostility. It is much better, both for this purpose and for others, that a preacher should strive to be well acquainted with one or a few departments of Physical Science, than that he should dip lightly into many.

Two especial difficulties beset the use of scientific illustration. It has been so common to make Astronomy, Geology, etc. the occasion for marvellous flights of would-be eloquence, that many persons shrink from all allusion to such subjects, as savoring of mere declamation. But one highly objectionable extreme should not drive us to the other. It is surely possible to use such illustrations in a direct and quiet fashion; and if now and then they really kindle the imagination and excite emotion, in such cases it will be natural, and the effect will be good. But beware of borrowing from Chalmers' Astronomical Sermons; it is wearing Saul's armor. The other difficulty is, that much of the finest scientific illustration demands more knowledge of science than the great mass of hearers really possess. Now an illustration which would be particularly acceptable and profitable to a few, may sometimes be employed, provided we introduce it with some quiet remark, not saying that most persons are unacquainted with this subject, but that such persons as happen to have paid attention to such or such a matter will remember, etc. Then no one will complain of our alluding to a topic of which he is ignorant. Or it may be proper to give the information necessary in order to appreciate the illustration, provided we can do so in few words, and without anything that looks like display. It is certainly lawful to spend as much time upon describing a phenomenon or explaining a principle of nature which will afford good illustration, as we should spend upon telling an anecdote for the same purpose, if only the description or explanation be made intelligible and interesting to all. Some sermons are but scientific lectures, with a religious application.

Besides Astronomy and Geology, Physics and Chemistry, other branches of science are coming to be freely used Whately was very fond of illustrations from Zoology, and James Hamilton from Botany. The various departments of Medical Science have always been thus employed. There is an obvious and always interesting analogy between bodily disease or healing and that of the soul; and Bacon has noticed that the figurative language of Scripture is drawn with especial frequency from Agriculture and Medicine. Psychology, in its several departments, is often itself the theme of pulpit discussion,* but is also rich in illustration of distinctively religious themes. Social Science will add much to what is furnished by our own observation of life; and the science of Law is of great value, not only from its connection with the revealed Law, but as illustrating the doctrines of atonement and justification.

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* Comp. chap. 4, § 1.

(4.) History. Preachers have always made much use of illustration from history. The field is in itself boundless, but is in practice greatly limited by the popular lack of extensive acquaintance with it. Here, as in the case of Science, we may sometimes skilfully introduce what is familiar to but a few, and may often give, briefly, without ostentation, and in an interesting manner, the requisite information. Great as is the value for our purposes of Science, and the attention now bestowed upon it, we must not forget that History, from its narrative and descriptive character and its human interest, has a peculiar and almost unrivalled charm. And in some respects this is especially true of *Biography*, both general and religious. Here there is the interest which always attaches to a person, to an individual human life. And biographical facts can often be more readily stated than those of general history. Early preachers drew nearly all their historical and biographical illustration from ancient history. Jeremy Taylor, for example, greatly abounds with this. In our day more modern sources are of course chiefly in request, and ancient writers are now comparatively a fresh field, particularly if one will take them at first hand, and not simply borrow from other preachers, or from recent works on ancient history. Thus Herodotus and Plutarch, even in a translation, may be used with great advantage; and so as to Josephus, whose works are now by most preachers unwisely neglected. Spurgeon is very fond of illustrations from the lives of devout men; and Richard Fuller employs all manner of historical and biographical incident, both secular and religious, with rare felicity and power.

All preachers derive illustration from the *news* of the day. Some carry this too far, warranting the reproach that they "get the text from the Bible, and the sermon from the newspapers." But it is a grave mistake if any are thereby repelled into avoiding a source of illustration so fresh in its interest, and so much more generally familiar to the audience than either science or history. By judiciously alluding to all suitable matters of recent occurrence, whether recorded in the newspapers, or happening in our own community, we may render the sermon more interesting, and may at the same time have opportunity to throw in useful practical remarks about many questions of right and wrong.* The danger is, that we shall set the people's minds agoing upon the matters which occupy them every day, to the neglect of our sacred theme. This may be avoided if on the one hand we take care not to intermingle an excessive amount of such allusion, and on the other hand to keep it strictly subordinate, *in our own feelings* and in the method of introduction, to the religious aim of the discourse. If not thus subordinate, then the most interesting allusion will be the worst illustration.

Anecdotes, literally things unpublished, originally denoted interesting matters, chiefly historical and biographical incidents, gathered from unpublished manuscripts of ancient authors, and thrown into a miscellaneous collection. Though now more widely used, the term is still most properly applied to stories of what one has himself observed, or has drawn from oral sources. Understood, however, in the wider sense, so as to include published narratives of detached incidents, anecdotes are a valuable means of illustration, which some preachers employ excessively or in bad taste, but which others ought to employ much more largely than they do. He who feels that his style would be degraded by introducing an anecdote, may profitably inquire whether his style be not too stilted, or at any rate too monotonous in its sustained elevation, for popular discourse. Let anec notes be certainly true, if we present them as true, and let them be told without exaggeration or "embellishment." Let them not be ludicrous — though a slight tinge of delicate humor is sometimes lawful — not trivial, and especially not tedious. And as illustration is in general a subordinate thing in preaching, and that which is subordinate should rarely be allowed to become prominent, a preacher should avoid such a multiplication of anecdotes in the same sermon, or in successive sermons, as would attract very special attention. A greater freedom, both as to amount and kind, is admissible in platform-speaking, than in those more grave discourses which are usually called sermons.*

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* Comp. as to preaching on Politics, chap. 3, § 2.

(5.) Literature and Art. Even when science and history have been excluded, literature, ancient and modern in prose and in verse, covers an immense field, and offers a vast store of illustrative material. Suggestive, pleasing, or impressive sentiments, and striking expressions may be quoted, and allusion made to well-known literary works and characters, whenever it will really help to render the discourse interesting and useful. Quotations of poetry, though made by some men in offensive excess, are employed by very many with admirable effect; and while a few need to check their exuberance in this respect, the great mass of ministers should stimulate themselves to observe and retain more largely, and to use more freely, any appropriate poetical quotations. No one can have failed to notice how often quotations from hymns, particularly when they are familiar, add greatly to the interest and impressiveness of a sermon. Spurgeon often uses these very effectively. The Pilgrim's Progress, with its strong sense and homely simplicity, its poetic charm and devotional sweetness, is so rich in the choicest illustration that every preacher ought to make himself thoroughly familiar with it, and to refresh his knowledge again and again through life. Fables are so often alluded to in common conversation that we scarcely notice it, and the occasions are very numerous in which they might be usefully employed in preaching. An author of distinction, and of wide attainments and experience of life, remarked some years ago that, in his judgment, next to the Bible and Shakespeare, the most instructive book in the world was Æsop's Fables. Even nursery rhymes, though not often exactly appropriate in regular sermons, have been employed to good purpose in speaking to children.

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* Arvine's Cyclopædia of Anecdotes is of but little value. Bible Illustrations, New York, Sheldon & Co., 12mo, is better

Proverbs are a singularly valuable means of stating truth forcibly and impressively. True, they usually represent an imperfect generalization, and are one-sided, so that almost any proverb can be matched by an opposite one. Yet in exhibiting particular aspects of truth, in impressing particular points, they have great power, especially with the popular mind. "Any one who, by after investigation, has sought to discover how much our rustic hearers carry away, even from the sermons to which they have attentively listened, will find that it is hardly ever the course and tenor of the argument, supposing the discourse to have contained such; but if anything has been uttered, as it used so often to be by the best Puritan preachers, tersely, pointedly, epigrammatically, this will have stayed by them, while all the rest has passed away." "Great preachers for the people, such as have found their way to the universal heart of their fellows, have been ever great employers of *proverbs.*" * Our Lord once expressly employs a proverb, and repeatedly uses expressions which appear to have been proverbial. This was one of the various ways in which he sought to strike the common mind, and impress the popular heart. The proverbs of our own country and language have of course peculiar force with us; but those of other countries will have freshness, and if readily intelligible as well as striking, they may be very effective. All nations have numerous proverbs; and besides the peoples more nearly related to ourselves, they especially abound among the Hindoos, the Chinese, and some African tribes. It would sometimes be profitable to read slowly over lists of proverbs, considering what religious truth this and this will illustrate, and collecting such, or making reference to them on the margin, and associating them in our mind with the particular truths to which they relate.* Proverbs are often humorous; and while the coarse or ridiculous should be avoided we need not be too sensitive in that respect. "A thousand beauties are snatched from the very verge of propriety — while many humdrum commonplace men deserve the rebuke of Quintilian: 'His excellence was that he had no fault, and his fault that he had no excellence.' A sermon had better have too much salt in it than too little."† Besides proverbs proper, there are many sage maxims which are often repeated in conversation,‡ and many striking sayings which may be quoted from the Fathers, the Old English divines, etc.

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* Trench on the Lessons in Proverbs, quoted in Papers on Preaching, by a Wykehamist, p. 96. Compare, in this latter work, p 94–105.

Illustration is also frequently drawn from works of Art, especially from pictures. These are constantly used in books under the name of "illustrations" of the narrative or treatise, and never fail, when good, to interest every class of readers; and in like manner the description of pictures may be very effectively used in a sermon. Such a description should of course be brief, and free from any appearance of display.

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* Bohn's "Handbook of Proverbs" and "Polyglot of Foreign Proverbs" are excellent collections, and not costly.

† Papers on Preaching, p. 99.

‡ Comp. Aristotle's Rhet. II, 21.

(6.) Scripture. The Scriptures present materials of illustration suited to every legitimate subject of preaching, and belonging to almost every one of the above-mentioned classes, especially history and biography, poetry and proverbs, and all manner of pointed sayings. Several causes combine to make this the best of all the sources of illustration. The material is to some extent familiar to all, and thus the illustration will be readily intelligible. Again, this material will be much more impressive than any other, because of its sacredness, and its known and felt relation to ourselves. Besides, the frequent use of Scripture illustration serves to revive and extend the knowledge of Scripture among the hearers.

Every preacher should most diligently draw from this source. And to this end, besides keeping on hand some book or other particular portion of the Bible for thorough study, preachers should continue through life the rapid but attentive reading of the whole Bible, that its facts and sayings may be kept fresh in their minds, and readily present themselves for use. Among the elements of Spurgeon's power is his copious, and often very felicitous use of Scripture illustration.

§ 3. CAUTIONS AS TO THE EMPLOYMENT OF ILLUSTRATION.

(1.) Do not use every illustration that occurs to you, nor seek after them for their own sake. The question is, whether this or that will really conduce to the objects of the discourse, will really explain or prove what is under discussion, or make it more interesting and impressive. Some men get a general notion that illustration is a good thing, and that it is their duty to employ it, and they laboriously bring forward so-called illustrations which really effect nothing, and are therefore but useless lumber. Others, who have a fertile fancy or a well-stocked memory, while wanting in genuine culture and good taste, will excessively multiply or expand their illustrations. They forget that command of illustration, like command of words, involves not only copious production, but judicious selection and felicitous adaptation.

(2.) As a general rule, it is not well to talk about illustrating, but just to illustrate. If you can throw the light vividly on your subject, it will seldom be necessary to give notice beforehand that you are about to do so.

(3.) Carefully avoid turning attention away from the subject illustrated to the illustration itself. This is obviously a very grave fault, but is often committed. Illustrations stated at great length, with high-wrought imagery and polished phrase, such as Guthrie frequently employs, will almost inevitably have this effect; though sometimes, as in the case of Chalmers, they may be so felicitous, and applied with such passionate earnestness, that we at last forget everything in the subject illustrated. So many hearers are caring mainly for entertainment, that it is a sad thing if we divert their minds from some subject they ought to consider to the curious or admiring examination of the mere apparatus by which we throw light on it.*

From this whole discussion it will be evident that a preacher should be constantly accumulating the materials of illustration. Whether he had better jot down all that occur to him, keep a scrap-book, etc., or rely mainly on his memory, will depend on his mental constitution and habits; but neither method should be employed to the total neglect of the other.†

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* This fault occurs very frequently in speaking to children. There is a mere succession of stories or pictures, which teach nothing, impress nothing, and, save as idle entertainment, *are* nothing. Comp. Children in the Temple, p. 266–.7

† Comp. chap. 4, § 1.

CHAPTER VIII.

APPLICATION.

THE application in a sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion, or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing to be done. Spurgeon says, "Where the application begins, there the sermon begins." We are not to speak *before* the people, but *to* them, and must earnestly strive to make them take what we say to themselves. Daniel Webster once said, and repeated it with emphasis, "When a man preaches to me, I want him to make it a personal matter, a personal matter, a personal matter!" And it is our solemn duty thus to address all men, whether they wish it or not.

The sermons of Jonathan Edwards, with all their power, show the evil of having always a regular "application,' formally announced or indicated. Often a brief and informal application is best. Often, too, it is better not to reserve the application for the latter part of the discourse, but to apply each thought as it is presented, provided they all conspire towards a common result.

The term application is in general somewhat loosely employed in regard to preaching, for it includes two or three distinct things. Besides the application proper, in which we show the hearer how the truths of the sermon apply to him, and besides the frequent practical suggestions as to the best mode and means of performing the duty urged, there is also commonly included all that we denote by the terms 'persuasion' and 'exhortation.' But if the ideas conveyed are kept distinct, it is probably better to retain the term, with which all preachers and hearers are so familiar.

The application proper is often effected by means of "inferences" or "remarks." The former must not be theoretical or general deductions from the truths presented but must really give to those truths a practical bearing. And the remarks must not diverge in various directions, and become like the untwisted cracker of a whip, but should have a common aim and make a combined impression. In sermons upon historical subjects, it is lawful to bring out several distinct lessons, but these had better be pretty closely related.* It is obvious that while some subjects may be applied to the congregation as a whole, others will be applicable only to particular classes, or will have to be applied to distinct classes separately, as converted and unconverted, old and young, etc. But it is not necessary, as some preachers seem to imagine, always to make some kind of application to the unconverted, or some remark to them in conclusion. A sermon addressed throughout to pious people will often specially instruct and impress the unconverted. What men apply to themselves, without feeling that it was aimed at them, is apt to produce the greatest effect. It is never judicious to make an application to any particular individual, and very rarely to a small and well-defined class. What is popularly called "hitting at" some person or some few persons will almost always do more harm than good.

To give good practical suggestions is a task often calling for experience and the fruits of thoughtful observation, and sometimes demanding delicate tact, but is certainly, when well managed, a most important part of the preacher's work. When one has argued some general duty, as that of family or private prayer, of reading the Bible, or of relieving the needy and distressed, it is exceedingly useful to add hints as to the actual doing of the particular duty, so as to make it seem a practical and a practicable thing, so as to awaken hope of doing better, and thus stimulate effort.

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* Comp. Hoppin's Chr. Min. p. 181–5.

But the chief part of what we commonly call application is *persuasion.* It is not enough to convince men of truth, nor enough to make them see how it applies to themselves, and how it might be practicable for them to act it out—but we must "persuade men." A distinguished minister once said that he could never exhort; he could explain and prove what was truth and duty, but then he must leave people to themselves. The apostle Paul, however, could not only argue, but could say, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Do we not well know, from observation and from experience, that a man may see his duty and still neglect it? Have we not often been led by persuasion to do something, good or bad, from which we were shrinking? It is proper, then, to persuade, to exhort, even to entreat.

Persuasion is not generally best accomplished by a mere appeal to the feelings, but by urging, in the first place, some motive or motives for acting, or determining to act, as we propose. This is not properly called a process of argument. The motive presented may require previous proof that it is something true, or right, or good, but this proving is distinct from the act of presenting it as a motive; and if when bringing a motive to bear we have to prove anything concerning it, the proof ought to have great brevity and directness, or it will delay and hinder the designed effect.

A preacher must of course appeal to none but worthy motives. The principal motives he is at liberty to use may be classed under three heads, viz., happiness, holiness, love.

We may lawfully appeal to the desire for *happiness*

Those philosophers who insist that man ought always to do right simply and alone because it is right, are no philosophers at all, for they are either grossly ignorant of human nature, or else are indulging in mere fanciful speculation. No doubt some preachers err in that they treat happiness as the almost exclusive, at any rate as the chief motive. Certainly this should always be subordinated to duty and affection; but when thus subordinated, it is a legitimate and a powerful motive. The Scriptures appeal not only to our feelings of moral obligation, but to our hopes and fears, for time and for eternity. "It is profitable for thee," is a consideration which the Great Teacher repeatedly employs in encouraging to self-denial. A desire for the pleasures of piety in this life, or even for the happiness of heaven, would never, of itself alone, lead men to become Christians, or strengthen them to live as such; but combined with other motives, it does a great and useful work. And there is here included not only the pleasure to be derived from gratification of appetite and passion, but of taste, and of ambition.

All men desire *holiness*, at least in one sense of the term, though they often wish it united with sinful gratifications. The most abandoned man sometimes wishes to be good, nay, persuades himself that in certain respects he is good; and the great mass of mankind fully intend, after indulging a little longer in sinful pleasure, to become thoroughly good before they die. Here then is a great motive to which the preacher may appeal. The thorough depravity of human nature should not make us forget that goodness can always touch at least a faintly responsive chord in the human breast. We ought to hold up before men the beauty of holiness, to educate the regenerate into doing right for its own sake, and not merely for the sake of its rewards. We ought to stimulate, and at the same time control, that hatred of evil, which is the natural and necessary counterpart to the love of holiness. And as regards the future life, we should habitually point men, not only to its happiness, but still more earnestly to its purity, and strive by God's blessing to make them long after its freedom from all sin and from all fear of sinning. Such noble and ennobling aspirations it is the preacher's high duty and privilege to cherish in his hearers, by the very fact of appealing to them.

And the mightiest of all motives is *love*. In the relations of the present life, love is the great antagonist of selfishness. They who "have none to love," by any natural ties, must always interest their hearts in the needy and the afflicted, or they will grow more and more narrow and selfish. Accordingly, we may constantly appeal to men's love of their fellow-men, as a motive for doing right. Parents may be urged to seek personal piety, and higher degrees of it, for the sake of their growing children; and so with the husband or wife, the brother or sister or friend Now to this motive the gospel appeals in a very peculiar manner. We *ought* to love God supremely, and such supreme love would be our chief motive to do right and to do good. But sin has alienated us from God, so that we do not love him. And Christ presents himself, the God-man, the Redeemer, to win our love to him and thus to God. "Whosoever shall lose his life *for my sake*," are words which reveal the new and mighty gospel motive, love to Christ. To this, above all other motives, the preacher should appeal. Far from excluding others, it intensifies while it subordinates them.*

But our task is not merely the calm exhibition of motives, that men may coolly act according to them. Many truths of religion are eminently adapted to stir the feelings, and to speak of such truths without feeling and awakening emotion, is unnatural and wrong. And so mighty is the opposition which the gospel encounters in human nature, so averse is the natural heart to the obedience of faith, so powerful are the temptations of life, that we must arouse men to intense earnestness and often to impassioned emotion, if we would bring them to surmount all obstacles, and to conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil. Who expects to make soldiers charge a battery or storm a fortress without excitement? Many persons shrink from the idea of exciting the feelings. "It seems to be commonly taken for granted, that whenever the feelings are excited, they are over-excited."* But while ignorant people often value too highly, or rather too exclusively, the appeal to their feelings, cultivated people are apt to shrink from such appeals quite too much. Our feelings as to religion are habitually too cold—who can deny it? And any genuine excitement is greatly to be desired. Inspired teachers have evidently acted on this principle. The prophets made the most impassioned appeals. Our Lord and the apostles manifestly strove not merely to convince their hearers, but to incite them to earnest corresponding action, and their language is often surcharged with emotion.

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* On the subject of Motives, see much profound and suggestive remark in Vinet, page 203–22. Comp. Arist. Rhet. I. 10, 7 ff.

Yet we should never wish to excite feeling for its own sake, but as a means of persuasion to the corresponding course of action. In this respect many preachers err; some from not clearly perceiving that emotion is little worth unless it excites to action, and others, it is to be feared, from an excessive desire for popular applause. These last give their hearers the luxury of idle emotion, as a pathetic novel or a tragedy might do, and hearers and preacher go away well pleased with themselves and each other.†

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* Whately, p. 215.

† The remarks of Day on excitation (Art of Disc. p. 171), insisting that it is distinct from persuasion, and that "a considerable part of pulpit oratory" aims at excitation alone, are to be regretted, as tending to encourage a common error.

Bishop Butler, in a celebrated passage, has pointed out "that practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts, and that passive impressions grow weaker by being repeated upon us. . . . . . Passive impressions made upon our minds by admonition, experience, example, though they may have a remote efficacy, and a very great one, towards forming active habits, yet can have this efficacy no otherwise than by inducing us to such a course of action; and it is not being affected so and so, but acting, which forms those habits; only it must be always remembered, that real endeavors to enforce good impressions upon ourselves are a species of virtuous action."[*] No wonder some preachers find that their pathetic descriptions and passionate appeals now make but little impression upon persons who were once powerfully affected by them. The emotion was treated as an end, not as a means, and was habitually allowed to subside without any effect upon the hearer's active habits; and a steady diminution of the emotion itself was the inevitable result. Surely that is *not* good preaching,—whatever the unthinking may suppose,—which excites a mere transient and unproductive emotion.

It is matter of universal observation that a speaker who would excite deep feeling must feel deeply himself. Demosthenes sometimes spoke with such passionate earnestness that his enemies said he was deranged. Cicero says that it is only passion that makes the orator a king; that, though he himself had tried every means of moving men, yet his successes were due, not to talent or skill, but to a mighty fire in his soul so that he could not contain himself; and that the hearer would never be kindled, unless the speech came to him burning.[†] It is said of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, that he preached "with such an unction and emotion, that even those amongst his audience who did not understand the language in which he spoke, were, nevertheless, moved to tears by the very tones of his voice—the earnestness and burning zeal which appeared in his every gesture and look." *

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[*] Butler's Analogy, Part I, chap. 5, II.

[†] Cic. Orator, § 128–132.

Alas! it is often our chief difficulty in preaching to feel ourselves as we ought to feel. And a genuine fervor cannot be produced to order by an effort of will. We must cultivate our religious sensibilities, must keep our souls habitually in contact with gospel truth, and maintain, by the union of abundant prayer and self-denying activity, that ardent love to God and that tender love to man which will give us, without an effort, true pathos and passion. The famous John Henry Newman, in his "University Preaching," speaks as follows: "Talent, logic, learning, words, manner, voice, action, all are required for the perfection of a preacher; but 'one thing is necessary,'—an intense perception and appreciation of the end for which he preaches, and that is, to be the minister of some definite spiritual good to those who hear him. . . . . I do not mean that a preacher must aim at *earnestness*, but that he must aim at his *object*, which is to do some spiritual good to his hearers, and which will at once *make* him earnest." †

When the preacher does feel very deeply, his mere exhortation will have some power to move, especially where he has personal influence as a devout man, or for any reason has the sympathies of his audience. There is then the inexplicable contagion of sympathy. But he must avoid getting clear away from the hearers in his passionate feeling, for then sympathy will give place to its opposite.

Apart from sympathy with our own emotion, we can excite emotion in others only by indirect means, not by urging them to feel, though we should urge with the greatest vehemence. We mus hold up before the mind considerations calculated to awaken emotion, and let them do their work.[*] For this purpose the preacher may of course learn from the contemplation of the leading human passions, as to their nature, and the best means of exciting them.[†] And we need not only to know human nature in general, but in most cases also need to understand the peculiar circumstances, prejudices, tastes, etc. of those whom we address. This is plainly demanded in the case of a missionary to the heathen, but is hardly less necessary at home. One reason why unlearned preachers often have such power with the masses is, that they understand, and fully sympathize with, the persons whom they address, while learned men sometimes do not.

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* Potter, Sac. El. p. 211.

† Quoted by Potter, p. 213.

In order to excite any of the passions by speech, we have to operate chiefly through the *imagination*. "A passion is most strongly excited by sensation. The sight of danger, immediate or near, instantly rouseth fear; the feeling of an injury, and the presence of the injurer, in a moment kindle anger. Next to the influence of sense is that of memory, the effect of which upon passion, if the fact be recent, and remembered distinctly and circumstantially, is almost equal. Next to the influence of memory is that of imagination."[‡] In proportion as the hearer's imagination is kindled, he *seems to see* that which we present, and the effect upon his feelings approximates to the effect of sight.[§]

In presenting an object so that it may awaken imagination and impress the feelings, we usually need to give well-chosen details. Without this, as we have before seen, it is impossible to make a narration or description impressive.[||]

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[*] Comp. Whately, p. 216–19.

[†] Aristotle's discussion of certain passions (Rhet. II, chap. 1–17) is not exactly what we might hope to find, but contains much that is curious and suggestive.

[‡] Campbell, Phil. of Rhet. p. 103.

[§] See below on Imagination, Part III, chap. 5.

[||] See above, chap. 5, § 1.

But preachers sometimes so multiply details as to weary the hearer, offend his taste, or betray a lack of right feeling on their own part. It may be gravely doubted whether a man *can* carry through a minute description of the crucifixion, who is at the time cherishing an intense faith and love towards Christ. A few vivid details, presented very briefly, and with genuine emotion, will usually make a far deeper impression. And so with elaborate descriptions of the day of judgment, and the agonies of perdition. One who truly realized the scene, and tenderly loved his fellowmen, could hardly endure to dwell so long on the most harrowing details, and the preacher who does this is apt to be for the time (though unconscious of it) mainly alive to the artistic interest in his picture.

Comparison is often very effective in awakening emotion. Thus we make men feel more deeply how shameful is ingratitude to God, by first presenting some affecting case of ingratitude to a human benefactor. The emotion excited by something as regards which men feel readily and deeply, is transferred to the object compared. E. g. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." The effect of *climax*, gradually working the feelings up to the highest pitch, may also be very great, as every one has observed.

We must not try to be highly impassioned on all subjects, on all occasions, or in all parts of a discourse. Appeals to the feelings will usually be made only at the conclusion; sometimes, after the discussion of each successive topic, but then we must be sure that the interest first excited can be renewed, and gradually increased. It is a common fault with inexperienced preachers to make vehement appeals in the early part, even in the very beginning, of a sermon; in such cases there will almost inevitably be a reaction, and a decay of interest before the close. If several impassioned passages are to occur, those which come first should be comparatively brief, and followed by something calm or familiar. It is also important to avoid exhausting our physical force, before reaching that portion of the sermon which calls for the most passionate earnestness. He who is exhausted not only cannot speak forcibly, but cannot feel deeply. And a concluding exhortation should never be prolonged beyond the point at which the preacher is still in full vigor, and the hearers feel a sustained interest.

PART II.

ARRANGEMENT OF A SERMON.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANCE OF ARRANGEMENT.

THE effective arrangement of the materials in a discourse is scarcely less important than their intrinsic interest and force. This is a distinct part of the speaker's work, and should be contemplated and handled as something apart from invention on the one hand and from style on the other, albeit closely connected with both. In fact, the task calls for a specific talent. Some men exhibit from the very outset a power of constructing discourses which is quite out of proportion to their general abilities; and other men find nothing so difficult to acquire or exercise as skill in arrangement. And here, as in everything else that demands specific tálent, there is need of special training and practice.

In this respect the speaker is an architect. Out of gathered materials he is to build a structure, and a structure suited to its specific design. The same, or nearly the same materials may be made into a dwelling, a jail, a factory, a church. But how different the plan of the building according to its design, and how important that it be built with special reference to the design. In like manner, substantially the same materials may be wrought into a story, a dialogue, an essay, or a speech; and several speeches on the same subject, and embodying much the same thoughts, may make a very different impression according to the plan.

Or the speaker's task may be compared to the organization of an army, and then the concentration of its several divisions upon one objective point.

"We know not how to name a composition without order. It is disposition, it is order which constitutes discourse. The difference between a common orator and an eloquent man is often nothing but a difference in respect to disposition. Disposition may be eloquent in itself, and on close examination we shall often see, that invention taken by itself, and viewed as far as it can be apart from disposition, is a comparatively feeble intellectual force. 'Good thoughts,' says Pascal, 'are abundant.' The art of organizing them is not so common. . . . . . I will not go so far as to say that a discourse without order can produce no effect, for I cannot say that an undisciplined force is an absolute nullity. We have known discourses very defective in this respect, to produce very great effects. But we may affirm in general, that other things being equal, the power of discourse is proportional to the order which reigns in it, and that a discourse without order (order, be it remembered, is of more than one kind) is comparatively feeble. A discourse has all the power of which it is susceptible, only when the parts proceeding from the same design are intimately united, exactly adjusted, when they mutually aid and sustain one another like the stones of an arch. . . . . . This is so true, so felt, that complete disorder is almost impossible, even to the most negligent mind. In proportion to the importance of the object we wish to attain, or the difficulty of attaining it. is our sense of the necessity of order." *

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* Vinet, p. 264–5.

(1.) Arrangement is of great importance *to the speaker himself.* It reacts upon invention. One has not really studied a subject when he has simply thought it over in a desultory fashion, however long-continued and vigorous the thinking may have been. The attempt to arrange his thoughts upon it suggests other thoughts, and can alone give him just views of the subject as a whole. Good arrangement assists in working out the details, whether this be done mentally or in writing. Each particular thought, when looked at in its proper place, develops according to the situation, grows to its surroundings. If one speaks without manuscript, an orderly arrangement of the discourse greatly helps him in remembering it. One reason why some preachers find extemporaneous speaking so difficult is, that they do not arrange their sermons well. And not only to invention and memory, but to emotion also, is arrangement important. Whether in preparation or in delivery, a man's feelings will flow naturally and freely, only when he has the stimulus, support and satisfaction which comes from conscious order.

The speaker who neglects arrangement will rapidly lose, instead of improving, his power of constructing, organising, a discourse;* and he will have to rely, for the effect of his sermons, entirely on the impression made by striking particular thoughts, or on the possibility that high emotional excitement may produce something of order. For passion does sometimes strike out an order of its own. "I know that nothing is as logical, after its own manner, as passion; and that we may depend upon it for the direction of a discourse of which it is the principal inspiration. The beginning we may be sure will be good, and the beginning will produce all the rest. It will be repetitious, it will retrace its steps, it will digress, but it will do everything with the grace and felicity which always accompany it;

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* Comp. Shedd, p. 214.

and it would be less true and consequently less eloquent if it were more logical in the ordinary sense of the word. It naturally finds the order which suits it, and it finds this precisely because it does not seek after it. The rapid propagation of ideas, their concatenation by means of thoroughly vital transitions, which themselves constitute the movement of the discourse, suffice for the eloquence of passion."* This sort of thing is not unfrequently observed in the best efforts of some uncultivated but gifted men, and many a pastor has had occasional experience of it when forced to preach with inadequate preparation, and unusually helped by passionate emotion. It is very proper that a preacher should sometimes give himself up, for a small portion of a discourse, to the suggestions of passion, should throw himself upon the current of feeling; and in social meetings he may sometimes speak without any immediate preparation, and yet if he becomes deeply stirred, and gains the sympathies of his audience, may speak with spontaneous order, and with powerful effect. But to rely on this habitually is surpassingly unwise.

(2.) Still more important is good arrangement as regards the *effect upon the audience.* It is necessary, first, in order to make the discourse *intelligible.* "Hearers generally, when the preacher has a poor plan, *feel* the difficulty, though they may not be able to trace it to its real source; and one of the reasons why a man of truly philosophical mind is able 'to make things plain' even to illiterate hearers, is, that he presents clear thoughts in a proper order."† Many persons appear to think that intelligibility is altogether an affair of style; when in fact it depends quite as much on clear thinking and on good arrangement as on perspicuous expression. It is melancholy to think how large a portion of the people, even in favored communities, really do not understand most of the preaching they hear. Not a few would say, like Tennyson's "Northern Farmer," if they spoke with equal frankness, that they had often heard "parson a bummin' awaäy,"

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* Vinet, p. 271.

† Ripley, Sac. Rhet. p. 85.

> "An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut
> to saäy,
> An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said, an' I comed awaäy."

And not merely is this true of the comparatively ignorant and stolidly inattentive, but many sermons are not understood by the better class. "The audience keep nothing of the discourse; they carry away, in retiring, an indistinct mass of remarks, of assertions, of appeals, which nothing co-ordinates in their memory, and the impressions received are summed up in the saddest criticism that can be made by a devout person who came to hear with attention: I do not know exactly what the preacher preached about."* Besides, something worse may happen than that the discourse should not be understood; it may be misunderstood, utterly, and with deplorable results. We must strive not merely to render it possible that the people should understand us, but impossible that they should misunderstand.†

Again, it greatly contributes to make the discourse *pleasing*. "Order is heaven's first law." Even those phenomena in nature which seem most irregular, and those scenes which appear to be marked by the wildest variety, are pervaded by a subtle order, without which they would not please. Chaos might be terrible, but could never be beautiful. And discourses, which are pleasing but appear to have no plan, will be found really to possess an order of their own, however unobtrusive or peculiar. An ill-arranged sermon may of course contain particular passages that are pleasing, but even these would appear to still greater advantage as parts of an orderly whole, and the general effect of that whole must be incomparably better. Let it be added that a well-arranged discourse will much more surely keep the attention of the audience. And this not merely because it is more intelligible and more pleasing, but also because, being conformed to the natural laws of human thinking, it will more readily carry the hearer's thoughts along with it.

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* Coquerel, Observ. sur la Préd. p. 160.

† Comp. on Perspicuity of Style, Part III, chap. 2.

Further, good arrangement makes a discourse more *persuasive.* Both in presenting motives and in appeals to feeling, order is of great importance. He who wishes to break a hard rock with his sledge, does not hammer miscellaneously over the surface, but multiplies his blows upon a certain point or along a certain line. They who lift up huge buildings apply their motive power systematically, at carefully chosen points. So when motives are brought to bear upon the will.* And the hearer's feelings will be much more powerfully and permanently excited, when appeals are made in some natural order. "We may, by a word or an isolated act, give a movement to the soul, inclining it immediately to a certain object, to perform an act of will; but this movement is only a shock. By the same means we may repeat, multiply these shocks. . . . . Eloquence consists in *maintaining* movement by the development of a thought or proof, in perpetuating it, according to the expression of Cicero, 'What is eloquence but a continuous movement of the soul?'" †

And finally, it causes the discourse to be *more easily remembered.*

The importance of arrangement may be further seen by observing what are the principal elements of good arrangement? They appear to be unity, order, and proportion. It might seem quite unnecessary to urge the importance of *unity* in a discourse, but it is very often neglected in practice, particularly in text-sermons and expository sermons, which are frequently made up of two or three little sermons in succession. Whether the unity be that of a doctrinal proposition, of an historical person, or of a practical design, in some way there must be unity. And not only this, but *order.* All that is said might be upon the same subject, while the several thoughts by no means follow one another according to their natural relations, or according to the design of the discourse. But further, there must be *proportion.* This involves two things. The several parts of the discourse, whether they are distinctly indicated or not, must be so treated as to make up a symmetrical whole. Not that they are to be all discussed at the same length, but at a length proportioned to their relations to each other and to the entire discourse. And besides this proportion of natural symmetry, there is that of specific design. One may treat substantially the same topic, in essentially the same manner, and yet greatly vary the length of particular parts, and the stress laid upon them, according to the object then and there had in view; just as two animals are often found constructed according to the same plan, and with equal symmetry, while yet certain bones are of exceedingly different size, being adapted to special functions.

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* As to the order of *Arguments*, see above, Part I, chap 6, § 4.

† Vinet, p. 289.

Coquerel says that the lack of method is the most common fault of preaching, and the most inexcusable because usually the result of insufficient labor. "A man cannot give himself all the qualities of the orator; but by taking the necessary pains, he *can* connect his ideas, and proceed with order in the composition of a discourse."* Without specific talent for building discourse, one will not find it an easy task, and may never become able to strike out plans that will be remarkably felicitous; but a fair degree of success in arrangement is certainly within the reach of all, provided they are willing to work.

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* Coquerel, p. 163.

CHAPTER II.

THE SEVERAL PARTS OF A SERMON.

§ 1. INTRODUCTION. § 2. PLAN AND DIVISIONS. § 3. CONCLUSION

THE analysis of a discourse which some writers have proposed is too artificial. Some of the parts which they distinguish are very often blended with other parts. The *exposition,* for instance, will often constitute the introduction, and in many cases no formal exposition is necessary or appropriate. The *proposition* of the subject scarcely needs to be treated as a distinct part of the discourse. The simplest and most natural analysis would seem to be that which gives three parts, viz. the introduction, the plan, (including divisions, when these are made,) and the conclusion.

§ 1. THE INTRODUCTION.*

1. It can scarcely be necessary to argue at length to the effect that sermons ought generally to have an introduction. Men have a natural aversion to abruptness, and delight in a somewhat gradual approach. A building is rarely pleasing in appearance, without a porch, or something corresponding to a porch. The shining light of dawn, which shineth more and more till the perfect day, teaches us a lesson. And so any composition or address which has no introduction, is apt to look incomplete. An elaborate piece of music will always have a prelude, or at

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* This topic is very fully and carefully treated by Quintilian, IV, 1, and by Claude. See also Vinet and Hoppin.

least a few introductory notes; and in poems, histories, etc., there is usually some introduction. The same thing is true as to very many books of the Bible.

The introduction has two chief objects, to interest our hearers in the subject, and to prepare them for understanding it. As to the former, a preacher may usually, it is true, count on a certain willingness to hear. Not many come who are hostile to the truth, but very many, alas! who are sadly careless about it. And a much more lively attention may be secured by an interesting introduction. "We all know how much depends in the ordinary affairs of life upon first impressions. The success of his sermon often depends upon the first impressions which a preacher makes upon his hearers in his exordium. If these impressions be favorable, his audience will listen to the remaining part of his discourse with pleasure and attention; and consequently, with profit." * Our aim should be to excite not merely an intellectual interest, but, so far as possible at the outset, a spiritual and practical interest — to bring them into sympathy with our own feeling, and attune their minds into harmony with the subject we design to present. One may sometimes expressly request attention, as did Moses (Deut. 4 : 1), Isaiah (28 : 14), Stephen (Acts 7 : 2), and our Lord (Matt. 15 : 10); but such a request, if often repeated, would lose its force, and it is usually best to aim at saying something which will at once interest the hearer's mind. "What is the best way," asked a young preacher of an older one, "to get the attention of the congregation?" "Give 'em something to attend to," was the gruff reply.

The other object, to prepare the audience for understanding the subject, is obviously very important, and to some extent can often be effected. But our efforts in this respect must be carefully guarded against the danger of

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* Potter, Sac. Eloquence, p. 97.

anticipating something which properly belongs to the body of the discourse.

The German preachers very often give an introduction before announcing the text. This fashion appears to have originated in the fact that most of them are required to take their text from the *pericope*, or lesson appointed for the day, so that it may be assumed as to some extent known already, before it is announced. The habitual practice of thus beginning with an introduction is apt to make it too general, or pointless, or far-fetched — faults not unfrequently seen in the German discourses; but some introductions of this sort are exceedingly felicitous, and the practice is well worthy of occasional adoption among ourselves.

There are cases in which it is best to dispense with introduction, and plunge at once into the discussion; for example, when the sermon must needs be long, or when nothing has been struck out that would make a really good introduction. In familiar addresses, as at prayer-meetings, Sunday School meetings, etc., this course is quite often preferable. In all preaching, let there be a good introduction, or none at all. "Well begun is half done." And ill begun is apt to be wholly ruined.

2. The sources from which the preacher may draw introductions are extremely numerous and various. There may, however, be some advantage in classifying them as follows:

(1.) The text. Wherever the meaning of the text requires explanation, this explanation may of course form the introduction. So, too, when an explanation of the context would throw light on the meaning of the text.* These seem to be very natural sources; and Robert Hall, with his severe taste, commonly began with some explanation of the text or the context, preferring this to more ambitious introductions. And if not for explanation proper there may be occasion for illustration of the text, by means of historical and geographical knowledge, such as will make its meaning, though not more clear, yet more vivid and interesting. In other cases, some account of the writer of the text, or of the condition of any particular persons whom he addressed (as in the case of Paul), may serve to interest hearers in the text, or to prepare them for understanding it.

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* As to the method of pulpit exposition, see above, Part I, chap 5, § 1.

(2.) The subject to be discussed, if obvious from the mere statement of the text, or if announced at the outset, may then furnish an introduction in various ways. We may remark on its relation to some other subject, e. g. "to the genus, of which the subject is a species," or to some opposed or similar subject, or one related to it as cause, or consequence, or case in point. 'Where the sermon is designed to be explanatory or practical, an introduction on the importance of the subject will often be appropriate; where the sermon is to establish the truth of a proposition, or to exhibit its importance, the introduction will frequently explain the nature of the subject involved. The preacher "may state the *intellectual advantages* to be derived from discussing such a theme. The subject may be the doctrine of moral evil, or that of divine sovereignty; it may be stated at the beginning, that these are the greatest problems of the human mind meeting the philosopher as well as the theologian; that they have called forth the strength of the best intellects of the race; that no problems are more difficult, and therefore none more deserving of the attention of thinking minds. He may state the *connections of the subject* with other more practical spiritual truths. He may remove the prejudice that the doctrine has no immediate practical bearing or utility, even as depravity, for instance, or the doctrine of sin, lies in one sense, at the base of the whole Christian system, of the atonement, regeneration, holiness, and the Christian life. He may make some *historical allusion* naturally connected with the theme, which always forms an attractive introduction."* And so in many other ways.†

(3.) The occasion. If the sermon has reference to some particular season of the year, or is preached at some special religious meeting, in connection with the administration of an ordinance, or the like, we may begin by remarking upon the occasion. So with allusions to the character of the times in which we live, or to recent events or existing circumstances, as showing why the particular text or subject has been chosen, or as tending to awaken a livelier interest in it.‡ Or we may speak of doubts known to exist as to the question involved, or hostility to the truth in this respect, or of some common mistake, or some prevailing or growing error, or evil practice, with reference to this subject.§ In other cases allusion is made to the religious condition of the church or congregation, or cheering news from some other church or section of country. Sometimes one may refer to a subject or subjects heretofore discussed, as furnishing occasion for presenting to-day the present subject; and the hymn which has just been sung, or a passage of Scripture (not containing the text) which has been read, will occasionally afford an interesting introduction. In rare cases, the preacher may begin by speaking of himself, whether it be of his feelings as a preacher, of his interest as a pastor, of some particular epoch in his connection with this church, or of something belonging to his personal experience as a Christian.|| Only, let the preacher beware of *apologies*. These often create the suspicion of

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* Hoppin, p. 124.

† Comp. Vinet, p. 302.

‡ E. g. Wesley's sermon on The Great Assize.

§ Comp. Otto, Prak. Theol. s. 368.

|| To this class belongs an exceedingly felicitous introduction of Spurgeon's, First Series, Sermon I.

insincerity, where it is undeserved, because they are sometimes in fact insincere, and because the preacher who feels at the outset oppressed by ill health or unfavorable circumstances, may, quite unexpectedly to himself, rise to the subject, and succeed remarkably well. Let a preacher *never* say he feels unusually embarrassed on the present occasion, etc. etc., as we hear it so often. Apologies are like public rebukes for disorder in the congregation, in that one will very seldom regret having omitted them, however strongly inclined at the moment to speak. When there is any real occasion, whether in beginning or ending the sermon, for what might be called apology, let it never proceed, or seem to proceed, from anxiety as to the preacher's reputation; let it be brief, quiet, and, as it were, incidental.

The question will often require to be decided whether any of these remarks upon the occasion shall be made in the introduction, or in the conclusion. We must consider whether a particular remark of this kind is better suited to awaken interest in the discussion, or to deepen the impression made by the application. Affecting personal allusions, in which the preacher might be interrupted by his emotions, are in general better reserved to the conclusion.

(4.) There is an immense variety of other sources, which do not admit of classification, and can only be set down as miscellaneous. The preacher's inventive genius should be freely and widely exercised, in seeking for every particular sermon the most thoroughly appropriate introduction.*

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* The student may consult, as a few examples of very striking introductions, Bossuet's Funeral Sermon for the Duchess of Orleans, though this has some obvious faults; Monod's Sermon on "God is Love;" Robert Robinson on "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" and Richard Fuller on The Three Hebrews in the Furnace — where some would think it better to omit the first words.

3. Let us turn to consider the qualities of a good Introduction.

The introduction must present some thought closely related to the theme of discourse, so as to lead to the theme with naturalness and ease, and yet a thought quite distinct from the discussion. Inexperienced preachers very frequently err by anticipating in the introduction something which belongs to the body of the discourse; and the danger of doing this should receive their special attention.

As a rule, the introduction should not aim to give instruction separate and apart from the lessons of the discourse. Its design is altogether preparatory. The preacher will often find himself tempted, especially in introductions drawn from the text or context, to remark in passing upon interesting matters which are somehow suggested, but are foreign to his purpose on that occasion. This temptation should be resisted, except in very peculiar cases. You have determined to carry the audience along a certain line of thought, hoping to arrive at a definite and important conclusion. Do not first wander about and stray awhile into other paths, but lead on towards the route selected, and enter it.

The introduction should generally consist of a single thought; we do not want a porch to a porch. But it is frequently appropriate to present some introductory thought, and afterwards give an exposition, which in such cases becomes a part of the body of the discourse, or else constitutes a sort of halt, while we clear the way for the discussion.

It is desirable to avoid the practice of beginning with some very broad and commonplace generality, as with reference to human nature or life, to the universe or the Divine Being. Of course there is sometimes real occasion for this, but many preachers practise it as an habitual method, and it is apt to sound like an opening promise of dulness — a platitude to start on.

On the other hand, the introduction must not seem to promise too much, in its thoughts, style, or delivery. Let it be such as to excite interest and awaken expectation, provided the expectation can be fairly met by the body of the discourse. It should not be highly argumentative, nor highly impassioned. As to the latter, it must be remembered that even if the preacher is greatly excited at the outset, the audience usually are not, and he had better restrain himself, so as not to get beyond the range of their sympathies. When Cicero broke out with his opening words against Catiline, the Senate was already much excited; and so with Massillon at the funeral of Louis the Great.* Such exceptional cases must be decided as they arise. "It is the privilege of talent and the fruit of study and experience, to know when to venture and when to abstain. It cannot be allowed to teaching, strictly so called, to set aside talent or anticipate the dictates of experience." † Moreover, while earnestly seeking to make the introduction interesting and engaging, we must shun the sensational, and the pretentious. Whatever savors of display is exceedingly objectionable in a preacher, and particularly at the outset. And he should not merely begin with personal modesty, but also with official modesty, reserving for some later period of the sermon anything which it may be proper to state with the authority belonging to his office.

A good introduction would, in general, be exclusively adapted to the particular discourse. In some cases, a certain general thought might with equal propriety introduce several different subjects. Thus some account of Paul might form the introduction to sermons on various passages of his writings; yet the account must in almost every case be at least slightly varied, if it is to be exactly adapted to the design. So with the description of a Scripture locality; and so, to some extent, with introductions personal to the speaker. Lawyers make many speeches on very similar subjects or occasions; and this fact partly explains Cicero's statement that he kept some introductions on hand, for any speech they might suit — as was also done by Demosthenes.* We should beware of set phrases and stereotyped forms of introduction; the people very soon begin to recognize them, and the effect is then anything else than to awaken interest and excite curiosity. Nowhere is it more important to have the stimulus and charm of variety, and this is best attained by habitually seeking to give the introduction a specific and exact adaptation.

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* "My brethren, God only is great," were his first words.

† Vinet, p. 105.

The introduction must not be too long. An eminent preacher, much inclined to this fault, was one day accosted by a plain old man as follows: "Well, you kept us so long in the porch this morning that we hardly got into the house at all." Of course it may sometimes be much longer than would be generally proper; and the attempt of some writers to tell how many sentences an introduction should contain, is exceedingly unwise. But "where one sermon is faulty from being too abruptly introduced, one hundred are faulty from a long and tiresome preface." †

The introduction, though simple and inelaborate, should be carefully prepared. Quintilian remarks that a faulty proem may look like a scarred face; and that he will certainly be thought a very bad helmsman who lets the ship strike in going out of the harbor.‡ The extemporaneous speaker should know quite exactly what he is to say in the introduction. But it is very doubtful whether he ought, as is frequently recommended and practised, to have the introduction *written*, when the remainder of the discourse is unwritten. It is too apt to seem formal, and the transition to the unwritten to be abrupt and precipitous, something like stepping from a wharf into deep water, as compared with quietly wading out from the shore. It will sometimes happen that at an early stage of the preparation, an introduction will occur to the mind; more commonly, it has to be struck out or selected after the principal materials have been gathered. But as to the *composition* of the sermon in detail, (whether it be written or unwritten composition,) the introduction should be composed before the body of the discourse. This is the natural order, and the finished introduction will assist the preacher in composing the remainder, somewhat as it will help the hearers. An introduction to a discourse is quite different from a preface to a book.

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* Comp. Vinet, p. 301.

† Shedd, p. 182.

‡ Quint. IV, 1, 61.

The discussion of this subject may close with a useful remark from Vinet: "Among experienced preachers we find few examples of exordiums altogether defective; we find few good ones among preachers at their beginning. We hence naturally infer, that there is in this part of the discourse something of special delicacy, but nothing which demands peculiar faculties." *

§ 2. PLAN AND DIVISIONS.

1. The body of the discourse must be constructed on some plan, or it is not a discourse at all. Though there be no divisions, and no formal arrangement of any kind, yet the thoughts must follow each other according to the natural laws of thought. Men who rely on their powers of absolute extemporizing, or who imagine themselves to

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* Vinet, p. 297.

possess a quasi-inspiration, usually stagger and stray in every direction, following no definite line, and accomplishing very little, save where passion comes in, and strikes out an order of its own.*

The plan of a discourse in the broadest sense includes the introduction and the conclusion, but as these are here discussed separately, we may, for convenience, speak of the plan apart from them.

It is not well to call the body of the discourse the *proof*, as a general name, though some able writers have done so. The treatment frequently consists of proof, in whole or in part, but frequently also of explanation, or the impressive exhibition of a theme, without any process of proof. In hortatory sermons there is a series of motives, but to bring these to bear on the will is a very different thing from proving, though often confounded with it.† After excluding the introduction and conclusion, the remainder is perhaps best called the treatment of the subject, or simply the body of the discourse. But our present concern with this is to consider the fact that it must have a plan.

Sometimes a plan will occur to us with the subject, or on very little reflection. In other cases we only get a variety of separate thoughts. It is well then to jot them down as they occur, to make the thoughts objective, so that we may draw off and look at them, and sooner or later a plan of treatment will present itself. This effort to make out an arrangement will often suggest to us new thoughts which otherwise we should never have gained.‡

One ought to seek not merely for some plan, but for the best. "There are plans energetic and rich, which, applying the lever as deeply as possible, raise the entire mass of the subject; there are others which escape the deepest divisions of the matter, and which raise, so to speak, only one layer of the subject. Here it is, especially here, in the conception of plans, that we distinguish those orators who are capable of the good, from those who are capable of the better — of that better, to say the truth, which is the decisive evidence of talent or of labor. . . . . . Every one should strive, as far as possible, for this better, and not be content with the first plan which may present itself to his thought, unless, after having fathomed it, he finds it sufficient for his purpose, suited to exhaust his subject, to draw forth its power — unless, in a word, he can see nothing beyond it."* The plan ought to be *simple,* not only free from obscurity, but free from all straining after effect, and yet ought, so far as possible, to be *fresh* and striking. So many sermons follow the beaten track, in which we can soon foresee all that is coming, as to make it a weary task even for devout hearers to listen attentively. One feels inclined to utter a plaintive cry, "Worthy brother, excellent brother, if you could only manage to driv us sometimes over a different road, even if much less smooth even if you do not know it very well — I am so tired o this!" And it is only a plan that strikes, that has an chance of being remembered. Still, we must carefull avoid mere sensational, odd, or "smart" plans. A sermo might excite much interest, and be remembered long, by reason of such qualities, without doing half as much real good as another that was heard quietly and soon forgotten, but made, so far as it went, a salutary impression.† We must also avoid great *formality* of plan.

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* Comp. chap. 1, on the importance of arrangement.

† Comp. Part I, chap. 8, on Application.

‡ Comp. chap. 1

"May I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that in the distribution of the matter of our sermons we indulge too little variety, and expos ing all our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion derived from just and affecting sentiments be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address? I cannot but imagine the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught would have rendered them impatient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end, instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages will instantly evaporate; yet no man perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can anything be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody "*

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* Vinet, p. 276–7.

† Comp. as to selection of Texts, Part I, chap. 1.

As regards formality, there has been much improvement during the present century, but many preachers are still stiff, uniform and monotonous in their plans.†

2. The plan of a discourse will usually embrace a state-

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* Robert Hall, Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports of a Christian Minister, Works, Vol. I, p. 140.

† Examples of strikingly felicitous plans may be frequently met with in the sermons of Saurin, William Jay, and Spurgeon; see also R. Hall on the Glory of God in Concealing, and J. M. Mason on Messiah's Throne, the latter having a considerable multiplication of divisions and subdivisions, but admirably managed. The plans of Spurgeon incline to formality, those of Beecher are perhaps too discursive and unsymmetrical.

ment of the subject, what is technically called the *Proposition.* There is frequently no need of this, the subject being obvious from the text, or sufficiently indicated by the introduction. In most cases, however, the subject should be distinctly stated, even in many text-sermons and expository sermons, and sometimes the proposition requires great care.* As to its form, the proposition may be *logical* or *rhetorical.* "Religion produces happiness" would be a logical, "The pleasures of piety" a rhetorical proposition. The former conduces to unity, consecutive thinking, argumentative force; the latter to freedom and variety of treatment, giving room for proof, impressive exhibition, application, or whatever mode of treatment may be desired. A preacher will be likely to prefer one or the other according to his turn of mind and training. Whichever he prefers, he ought frequently to employ the other, for the sake of his own improvement and of variety in his discourses. Sometimes the two forms may both be used in the same discourse; thus a man might announce as his subject, "Religion produces happiness, or the pleasures of piety." A variety of the logical is the *interrogative* form. This sometimes awakens attention by seeming to leave it an open question, to be decided on the present occasion, whether the proposition involved is true or false, or by stimulating curiosity as to the precise answer to the question which the preacher will give. In some cases it is more consistent with modesty to propose an inquiry than a process of proof. And where the subject requires to be discussed both negatively and affirmatively, the interrogative form of proposition is particularly convenient. "Should the preacher's subject be, for instance, Evidences of personal piety, it would be more congruous, instead of exposing under this statement, in several items, insufficient or false evidences, and then mentioning in the same series the satisfactory evidences, to raise the inquiry, What are genuine evidences of piety? In answering this inquiry, he might either in a didactic manner deny the sufficiency of certain supposed evidences, or propose various questions, such as Is such a quality, or course of conduct, a genuine evidence? Is such another? etc., ... and then exhibit the true evidences." *

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* As to the propriety of withholding the proposition through policy, see Part I, chap. 6, § 1.

The proposition, or statement of the subject, should be complete (i. e. including all that it is proposed to treat), simple and clear, brief and attractive.† It may sometimes be repeated, whether in different forms, or in other but equivalent terms; and occasionally the hearers are gradually brought up to it by a series of statements, the last of which is definite and precise, seeming to strike the very heart of the matter.

3. It is a question of much practical importance whether the plan of a discourse ought to include DIVISIONS, and if so, what should be their number, character, order, and general management.‡

(1.) Two things are obviously necessary to an effective discourse; that there shall be a plan, as we have seen, and that there shall be movement, progress. These requisites must be harmonized. The movement must not be wild and irregular, like undisciplined cavalry, and the orderly plan must not involve such interruptions and pauses as would retard movement. Furthermore, as a work of art, a discourse ought not to have its joints obtrusively prominent, nor its several members attracting too much of separate attention, but all should stand forth as one symmetrical

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* Ripley, p. 54. Comp. p. 52–4.

† Comp. Otto, Prak. Theol. s. 332.

‡ The term 'heads' is practically synonymous with 'divisions.' The distinction between division and partition is too refined for our present purpose.

whole. The Greek and Roman orators, greatly concerned to make the speech a finished work of art, and often anxious to hide the labor bestowed upon the preparation, made no clearly marked divisions. Yet in all cases they followed a definite plan, and advanced in an orderly manner, even as Horace says,* speaking of poetry, that the power and the beauty of order consists in saying just now what just now ought to be said, and postponing for the present all the rest. In much the same manner the Christian Fathers preached. But the great Schoolmen of the middle ages, applying the most minute logical analysis to all subjects of philosophy and religion, established a fashion which was soon followed in preaching also. The young preachers, being trained by the books they read and by the oral teaching at the Universities to nothing else than this minute analytical discussion, made the mistake so often made still, of carrying lecture-room methods into the pulpit. Analysis became the rage. Scarcely anything was thought of but clear division and logical concatenation, and to this was to a great extent sacrificed all oratorical movement and artistic harmony. Too much of the preaching of all the modern centuries has been marred by this fault. Analytical exposition of topics, and elaborate argumentation, have been the great concern, to the comparative neglect of simplicity and naturalness, of animated movement and practical power. Preachers, especially the educated, have too often regarded instruction and conviction as the aim of their labors, when they are but means of leading men to the corresponding feeling, determination, and action. And the custom being thus established, it has been followed, simply because it was the custom, by many practical and deeply earnest preachers, who limited and overcame the evils of the method as best they could.

Two centuries ago, when the excessive multiplication of formal divisions and equally formal subdivisions was almost universal in France as well as in England, Fenelon inveighed vehemently against the whole fashion, urging a return to the methods of the ancient orators,* and on this question almost all subsequent writers have taken sides. Yet a certain formality of division and of general order has continued to be common in France and Germany, and for the most part in England and America. Dr. Arnold of Rugby set the example, and urged it upon others, of avoiding divisions, and making the sermon a very informal address, and since his time many preachers in the Church of England, such as Trench and Kingsley, have followed that course.† But it is worthy of special notice that the two ablest and most generally admired preachers the Church of England has recently produced, Robertson and Liddon, both regularly make divisions, and commonly indicate them in passing, while the former frequently states his divisions beforehand, and also marks numerous subdivisions.

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* Ars Poetica 42.

From these principles and facts, what are we to conclude? Distinctly marked divisions are not *necessary*, and need not be made where the plan of the discourse can be easily followed without them; only the preacher must remember in judging on this point, that the plan is of course familiar to him, and his hearers may not note transitions which are obvious to his eye, unless attention be somehow called to them. But while not necessary, distinctly marked divisions will usually be of service, not only in making the train of thought plain to the hearers, but also of service to the preacher himself, both as compelling to logical correctness and completeness of preparation, and as helping him to remember, in extemporaneous delivery. In every particular sermon or class of sermons, we must decide the case upon its own merits; but it will commonly be best to make divisions. Whether they shall be slightly or broadly marked, and how carefully the entrance upon a new division should be indicated, must also be decided according to the merits of the case. Where the subject specially requires explanation and argument, it will commonly be advantageous to have clearly stated divisions, and frequently subdivisions also; but these must not be so multiplied, nor so stated, as to prevent the discourse from standing out as a living whole, or to interrupt its progressive movement towards the practical end in view.

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* Fenelon, Dialogues on Eloq., Dial. II.

† There is said to be of late a similar movement on the part of some preachers in Germany.

Alexander says * that "as much as a discourse gains in method and articulation by composing it according to a logical analysis or programme, so much it loses in rapidity, richness and animation;" and so he inclines to favo Fenelon's view. But it is to be observed that Alexande formed this judgment from his experience in middle age with a thoroughly disciplined mind, accustomed to compose in logical order. In such circumstances a man is apt to grow weary of all regulated methods, so as to feel relief in disregarding them, and he may often allow himself to do so, because his mind may be relied on to achieve a spontaneous order. But for most men, especially the young, the case is otherwise, and such remarks were probably never designed for them.

It is frequently said that secular orators at the present day make no formal divisions. But they often do, particularly in elaborate addresses to a great popular audience, sometimes even announcing beforehand the series of topics they mean to discuss. In most of the speeches made by lawyers and statesmen, the history of the case or the nature of the question determines the order of discussion,

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* Thoughts on Preaching, p. 52. Comp. p. 32.

and leaves no occasion for dividing the subject on any other principle.

(2.) As to the *number* of divisions, we must consult simplicity, and at the same time vividness and variety. It is of course more simple to have but few, and in many cases two divisions will be most natural and pleasing. Vinet says of Bossuet that "he delights, like Fenelon, in dichotomy; and in my judgment, divisions into two parts are ordinarily the most tasteful."* But as a uniform method, the twofold arrangement scarcely presents the requisite variety. It is also highly desirable that the divisions, as stated, should be interesting, having the vividness which belongs to concrete or specific thoughts, and this can often be attained only by having several divisions, since the reduction to a smaller number would render them abstract or general. "Take the topic, *In what consists the glory of gospel preaching?* In that it 1) is appointed by the Son of God; 2) makes known the will of God; 3) promises the grace of God; 4) is performed in the strength of God; 5) is attended by the blessing of God, and 6) leads souls to the presence of God. The division might be simplified: 1) in its establishment; 2) in its subject, 3) in its operation and effects. But the former is to be preferred because more striking."† Yet when the heads become as many as five or six, they must follow each other in a very natural order, or the average hearer will not easily retain them in mind. Accordingly, judicious and skilful preachers seldom have more than four heads.

We are thus prepared to understand why it is that sermons oftener have *three* divisions than any other number. This is a fact long observed, and made the subject of small wit — "three heads, like a sermon."‡ No doubt many preachers have tried to make out three divisions, even where nothing called for it, simply from habit, or from blindly following a custom. But the custom itself must have had some natural origin. Now a principal reason for it is seen from the considerations stated above; three divisions will give a goodly variety, without distracting attention, or burdening the memory. And in many directions we meet with similar or analogous facts. Thus one of the commonest schemes of discourse will naturally be, What? Why? What then? i. e. explain, prove, apply. A syllogism, when fully stated, furnishes three propositions. There cannot be a climax without at least three steps Three gives the idea of completeness — beginning, middle, end. When men start in a race, the signal is always, "One, two, three," neither more nor less. The Scriptures often use a threefold repetition as the most emphatic and impressive; Holy, holy, holy, Ask, seek, knock, etc. Often logical and rhetorical reasons combine to fix three as the number. Thus, The resurrection of the body is 1) possible, 2) probable, 3) certain. To carry religion into daily life is 1) possible, 2) desirable, 3) obligatory. Piety is for every young man 1) a thing to be respected, 2) a thing to be desired, 3) a thing to be sought.* These considerations go to show that it is not accidental, and not strange, that elaborate discourses so often have three divisions. The fact that this is the commonest number may incline us to avoid it, unless required by the natural arrangement of the subject; but when it is so required, as must very frequently be the case, let us employ it without hesitation. In general, then, one should make the most natural division, considering the subject and the practical design of the discourse, but not often allowing the number of heads to exceed four. That in so doing the number most frequently occurring will be three, and next to that two, is what he may expect.

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* Vinet, p. 334.

† Otto, Prak. Theol. s. 355.

‡ Coquerel, p. 149, quotes ridicule of it by La Bruyère, in the reign of Louis XIV.

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* So Cicero, in the oration for the Manilian Law, argues, "You must choose a general; you must choose an able general; you must choose Cneius Pompeius." Hoppin, p. 155.

(3.) The *character* of the divisions must be determined by their relation to the subject proposed and to each other. As to the former, it is obvious that no one division should be coextensive with the subject; and yet inexperienced sermonizers sometimes unconsciously have it so. More important is the inquiry, whether the divisions should exhaust the subject. This depends upon what we mean by the subject. The general subject treated will very seldom be exhaustively divided in a sermon; but the view of it proposed in the discourse ought to be exhausted by the divisions. That is to say, they ought to exhaust the proposition, or we might say, the subject proposed. Yet even in this narrower sense, the oratorical division and subdivision of a subject will not commonly exhaust it as a logical analysis would do. The latter must rigorously set forth "all and singular" the contents of the proposition. The former requires that its divisions shall with a certain general completeness cover the whole ground of the proposition, so as to make the discourse a structure, but does not always demand scientific accuracy in that respect; and as to subdivisions, it is very easy to carry analysis farther than conduces to practical effect in speaking. Barrow, whose sermons are remarkable specimens of completeness in treating the subject proposed, whom Charles II called "an unfair preacher, because he exhausted every subject, and left nothing for others to say after him," has sometimes carried his analytical discussion so far as to make it wearisome to any ordinary congregation. The complete logical analysis of a subject, dividing and subdividing, will sometimes be useful as a part of the preparation for preaching on it; but the oratorical division is distinct from this, and often very different, especially as to subdivisions.*

As regards the relation of the divisions to each other, they must be *distinct* and *symmetrical.* It is not uncommon for unpractised speakers to have one division that really includes another,† and very common to see one that includes some part of what also comes under another. We are sometimes greatly tempted, in treating one branch of a subject, to go on with some closely related matter which yet properly belongs to another branch. The incongruity is not always obvious, and requires attention. Sometimes, in fact, it is difficult to decide where such or such an idea more properly belongs; but it must be confined to one head, or fairly divided between the two, so that, in whatever way, the heads shall be kept distinct. Furthermore, ideas are frequently set forth as distinct divisions which are not sufficiently distinct to be divided at all; and ideas which are distinct, will be so stated as to glide into each other, without any clear line of demarkation. "Words the most different, do not always convey essentially different ideas, as in this division: 'It is characteristic of Christian faith, that it *excites, guides, supports.*' To prove successively that a thing is contrary to good sense and contrary to our own interests, is to condemn ourselves to be in presence of nothing after finishing the first part." ‡ Besides being distinct, the divisions should be symmetrical. It is little to say that they must not be incongruous, though preachers of some ability do at times throw together matters which have as little congruity as the human head, a horse's neck, a body composed of parts brought from all directions and covered with many kinds of feathers, and the whole ending in a fish's tail — according to the well-known warning of Horace.* But the important precept is, that the divisions must all sustain the same kind of relation to the subject proposed. Nothing is more common, among the faults of inexperienced preachers, than to see three divisions, one of which is not co-ordinate with the other two, but only with some other proposition of which those two are really subdivisions; some of the divisions are branches of the tree, and others are but branches of branches. This fault should be carefully guarded against. In some respects, the idea of symmetry is often pushed too far. Of course the subdivisions of any one division should all sustain to it the same relation. But pains are often taken to give each division the same number of subdivisions, in order to make the plan symmetrical. Even when this is natural, it is very apt to appear artificial, particularly if the number of divisions and subdivisions be considerable; and when it is really artificial, the effect is not good. Pascal compares such matters inserted merely for the sake of symmetry to false windows in a building, a poor attempt to hide internal lack of symmetry, and which offend as soon as we know what they are. Another mistaken notion of symmetry requires that each division and sometimes even each subdivision should be discussed at about the same length. When natural, this is pleasing. But it will not often be natural. A mere external symmetry is far less important than proportion to the internal relation of the topics, and to the specific design of the discourse.†

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* The author once received, as a homiletical exercise, the sketch of a sermon containing four divisions, but with subdivisions and divisions of these again and again, till the whole numbered more than a hundred and twenty. The analysis was almost faultless, but it would have made an intolerable sermon.

† Thus Cicero (De Inventione, I, 23) points out how improper it would be to undertake to show that from the opposite party's cupidity, and audacity, and avarice, many ills had befallen the state; because avarice is really one kind of cupidity.

‡ Vinet, p. 282.

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* Ars Poetica, 1.

† Comp. above, at the close of chap 1 The peculiarities, as to

The different principles on which subjects may be divided are very numerous, and no brief discussion or enumeration of them would be of much utility.* One may learn much, as to the practical management of division, from the careful analysis of published sermons. The inexperienced preacher will find great advantage in having his plans critically examined by an instructor, or by some judicious friend. In this matter a man will soon learn more from having pointed out to him the faults which he himself has committed, than it is possible to teach in general terms. The study of Logic, in any really good treatise, will also be of great service, in this as in many other respects.

(4.) The *order* of the divisions will be controlled not merely by logical, but also by practical considerations. Even where instruction and conviction are especially aimed at, there is always in preaching a practical effect proposed, and usually, instruction and conviction are quite subordinate to the object of impressing the feelings and determining the will. As to instruction, it is obviously proper that those divisions should precede, which will help to understand the succeeding ones; and it is commonly convenient that negative considerations should precede the positive. So far as conviction is concerned, a sermon should arrange arguments according to the general principles which regulate the order of arguments, and which apply here not less than in the essay or treatise.† And in respect to practical effect, we must endeavor clearly to discern the particular end proposed, and then must consider what selection and arrangement of topics will be most likely, by kindling the imagination and warming the passions, to induce the

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divisions, of subject-sermons, text-sermons, and expository sermons, will be discussed below in chap. 3.

* Some good remarks may be found in Hoppin, p. 151; Kidder, p. 201. Comp. below on subject-sermons, chap. 3, § 1.

† See on order of arguments, Part I, chap. 6, § 4.

hearers to resolve and to act as we desire. For this purpose the abstract must precede the concrete, the general precede the specific or particular, and in general, instruction and conviction must precede appeal. The appeal, however, may either come in mass after the whole body of instruction and argument, or it may immediately follow each leading thought as presented. This last course, to apply as we go, has sometimes considerable advantages. The successive waves of emotion may thus rise higher and higher to the end. And besides, while thought produces emotion, it is also true that emotion reacts upon and quickens thought, so that the impressive application of one division may secure for the next a closer attention. Yet the interest must steadily grow as we advance, or the effect will be bad; and where we cannot feel sure that it will thus grow, point by point, then application had better be postponed till towards the close.*

The young preacher who repeats a sermon ought to consider whether he cannot advantageously rearrange it, or at any rate improve the plan.

(5.) The *statement* of the divisions and subdivisions, like that of the proposition, ought to be exact, concise, and as far as possible, suggestive, and attractive. Without straining after effect, one may often state a division in terms so brief and striking, that the hearer's attention will be at once awakened. It is well that the several divisions (and so with the several subdivisions of each) should be stated in similar forms of expression, where this can be done without artificiality. Such similarity of statement brings out the symmetry of the divisions, rendering them clearer and also more pleasing. Some German preachers occasionally throw their divisions into metre and rhyme, or adopt for the purpose some couplet or stanza from a familiar hymn.

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* Comp. on Application, Part I, chap. 8

(6.) Shall the divisions be announced beforehand? This was once almost universal, and is still the regular practice of many preachers. At one time in some parts of Germany, the plan of the sermon was printed, and either published in the newspaper of the previous week, or handed in slips to the congregation as they entered the church.* To make a minute announcement of divisions and subdivisions, and repeatedly recall them in passing, is very appropriate when lecturing to a class on some difficult subject, where the object is not persuasion, but only instruction and conviction. But in preaching, rightly regarded, these are commonly subordinate to persuasion. Now three cases may be noted, in which it is desirable to announce the divisions at the outset. (a) When the train of thought is difficult, and the announcement may aid in following it. Sometimes this would but increase the difficulty, the hearer finding it easier to comprehend each division by itself, as it is presented. But in other cases the divisions when placed side by side will throw light on each other. (b) When it is particularly desirable that not merely the practical impression should be permanent, but that the successive steps in the exposition or argument should be remembered. (c) When we judge that the announcement would awaken interest and attention, rather than abate them; and here every case must be decided upon its own merits. Unless one of these three conditions exist, no previous announcement should be made. It must be remembered that there are many different methods of announcing, beginning with the formal statement of numbered divisions (and sometimes of subdivisions also), and extending through numerous gradations to the perfectly informal, and perhaps very slight mention of the divisions as the points it is proposed to consider. Between these limits there may be devised a great variety of methods, by the exercise of power of invention, and of judgment and good taste. Shedd thinks * that, as a general thing, *recapitulation* is better than pre-announcement, as being more intelligible, more impressive, and more easily remembered. In many cases, this is true. In many others, the pre-announcement is best. Sometimes, it is even well to employ both.

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* **Hagenbach, Hom. s. 123.**

To announce at the outset the subdivisions also, would be desirable only in very peculiar cases, where the train of thought was in itself very important. It is, however, more frequently proper, after stating a particular division, then to announce its subdivisions, or rather to mention them in an easy and informal way.

4. The *transitions* from one part of a discourse to the next are most felicitous when least noticeable. The ideal of excellence would be that the parts should fit perfectly together, "like well-cut stones, needing no cement," to use Cicero's image, or that each should grow out of the preceding, by a process of natural development. This ideal can seldom be realized; but in all cases transition will be easy in proportion as the subject proposed has been thoroughly studied, and the thoughts to be presented have been well arranged. No good transition can be made between topics that have not a real and natural relation, such as to make it appropriate that they should stand in immediate succession. When therefore we find the transition difficult, it is well to inquire whether the arrangement is not defective. Often, indeed, the difficulty arises from the fact that we are attempting to work in some idea or passage which has no natural place in the train of thought. Buffon has remarked, "Those who fear to lose isolated thoughts, and who write detached passages at different times, never combine them without forced transitions." † And the difficulty

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* Hom. p. 195.

† Quoted by Vinet, p. 285. See also Skinner, Discussions in Theol., p. 168.

is even greater with scraps gathered from reading. These should be introduced only when they can be thoroughly incorporated into the discourse. Otherwise, no matter how sensible, striking or pleasing, they had better be omitted; if really so good, they will soon find their place somewhere else. A discourse is not a mere conglomeration or accretion of foreign matters. From whatever source its materials may have been derived, they must be made to unite and grow together. Like sap in the plant or blood in the body, the vital current of thought must flow through the whole discourse, giving it animation, flexibility, strength.

Still, it will frequently happen that the practical design of a sermon, or the exigencies of preparation, will require us to bring together thoughts between which there is not a perfect fit, or a spontaneous vital connection. It may then be necessary to interpose some third idea, related to both, and forming an easy transition.* Such an idea must not have any separate prominence, nor in fact attract to itself any attention from the persons addressed, though a critical observer would perceive that it is appropriate and properly introduced. In most cases the transition can be effected by a single brief sentence. To manage this with simplicity, grace and variety, is a task of some delicacy, but due attention and practice will enable any one to perform it with tolerable success. One of the most distinguished preachers of America is known to have remarked, that the transitions, the articulations, of a discourse, give the highest proof of oratorical skill. If under articulation we comprise the adjustment of successive thoughts to each other, this would naturally include arrangement, and taken with this breadth of meaning, the remark is unquestionably correct.

But whether the transition be in itself mediate or immediate, it is often desirable to employ some form of expres sion which, in conjunction with the natural change of tone and manner, shall cause the hearer to observe that we are here passing to another thought. This is sometimes done by numbering the divisions and subdivisions, and then introducing each by a mention of the number, which besides the formal statement, can be made in a variety of informal ways. And without numbering, or without stating the numbers, we may use any of those numerous expressions which indicate progress from point to point. Among the most common are *again*, *in addition*, *besides*, *furthermore*, *still further*, *moreover*, *another point*, *in the next place*, *and not only this*, *but etc.*, *on the other hand*, *once more*, *finally*, etc. etc.* But let not the inexperienced preacher imagine that there are any set phrases which propriety requires him to adopt. Let him notice what relation exists between the foregoing and following thoughts, and indicate the transition by any appropriate and simple expression, without hunting after novelty, and without neglecting variety.

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* Comp. Vinet, p. 317

If the sermon is unusually long, the transition to one of its later divisions may in some simple and quiet way acknowledge the fact, perhaps slightly apologize for it; if any particular portion, from its difficulty or its importance. requires special attention, this also may be indicated in the transition; and in rare cases a word may be thrown in to arouse flagging attention.† The propriety of all such passing remarks, and the method of making them, must be determined by good sense and good taste. If not well managed, they are much worse than nothing.

As to this whole matter of the plan of discourse, we may rejoice that in the present age, and especially in our country, there is no established and dominant custom, but a good degree of freedom. The preacher, particularly in

* Comp. Ripley, Sac. Rhet. p. 102.

† Comp. Ripley, p. 103.

his youth, had better not make haste to conclude that he is superior to general experience, but should study and practise different methods, following mainly those which he finds best suited to his powers, but frequently exercising himself in others, so as to let no one method become a necessity to him, so as to broaden and vary his cultivation, and to adapt himself to differences of taste among his hearers. On the other hand he need not be always following the fashions of his time, but, taking due account of the nature and design of pulpit discourse, should give free scope to his individuality, and sometimes strike out methods of his own, observing how they affect him and his hearers. He should be neither solicitous to appear independent and original, nor afraid to try experiments, under the control of good taste and devout feeling.*

§ 3. CONCLUSION.

Preachers seldom neglect to prepare some introduction to a sermon, but very often neglect the conclusion; and yet the latter is even more important than the former. John Bright, one of the foremost political orators of the present age, has stated that however little preparation he may make for the rest of a speech, he always carefully prepares the conclusion. Lord Brougham said that the conclusion to his celebrated speech before the House of Lords in defence of Queen Caroline was composed twenty times over, at least. The great orators of Greece and Rome paid much attention to their perorations, seeming to feel that this was the final struggle which must decide the conflict, and gathering up all their powers for one supreme effort. But how often we find it otherwise, especially on the part of preachers who extemporize. The beginning and earlier progress of the sermon show good preparation, and do well. But towards the close the preacher no longer knows the way; here he wanders with a bewildered look, there he struggles and flounders. Another, feeling excited at the close, launches into general exhortation, and proceeding till body and mind are exhausted, ends with what is scattering, feeble, flat. The conclusion ought to have moved like a river, growing in volume and power, but instead of that, the discourse loses itself in some great marsh, or ends like the emptying of a pitcher, with a few poor drops and dregs.

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* Upon the different methods of constructing subject-sermons, text sermons, and expository sermons, see below, chap. 3.

Let us lay down the rule, then, that the conclusion should be carefully prepared. If it is to comprise any impassioned personal appeal, we shall often find occasion to modify it in delivery, according to the state of feeling which has then been reached by ourselves and the hearers But one can usually determine, when preparing, precisely the thoughts with which the sermon ought to conclude, though he may leave the mode of stating them to be controlled by the feelings of the moment. He ought in every case to have ready, and well prepared, something that will make an appropriate and effective conclusion, even though leaving himself free, if the moment should so prompt, to strike in a different direction, or rise to a higher level. Where the subject will naturally lead to passionate exhortation, we can almost always foresee a certain range within which such exhortation must be restricted, if it is to be kept in relation to the subject, and can commonly fix some point beyond, towards which this emotional expatiation shall tend, and where we may close with some comprehensive statement or final appeal. The difficulty thus encountered as to the conclusion is only a higher degree of that which everywhere presents itself in the best forms of speaking, and which we must learn to overcome, viz. how shall we combine the most thorough possible preparation with the largest liberty in delivery.*

One element in the conclusion of a sermon will often be *recapitulation.* If the discourse has consisted chiefly of careful explanation or labored argument, and if it is important that its several divisions should be remembered, and doubtful whether they will be, then the divisions, and occasionally even certain subdivisions, may be distinctly re-stated. But this must be so managed, to use a phrase of Cicero's, "that the recollection may be revived, not the speech repeated." Though perhaps anxious at the moment to enlarge anew upon some favorite point, we must confine recapitulation to its proper office. In most sermons, however, we do not care to reproduce the several thoughts and fix them separately in the hearer's mind, but rather to gather them all together, and concentrate their force upon one final effort of conviction or persuasion. In such cases it is not well to make any formal recapitulation, but in a freer way to recall the train of thought, or the principal points of it, sometimes using very different forms of statement. This appears to be what Vinet would call *resumé*, as distinct from recapitulation.† For properly oratorical purposes, it is commonly much to be preferred. The recapitulation, or the *resumé*, especially the latter, may sometimes form the entire conclusion; but in most cases it only leads to the conclusion proper. It is often better, particularly where the discourse includes many points, to give some recapitulation before reaching the conclusion, usually when passing to the last division.

The conclusion will, for the most part, consist of *application.* This term, as we have already seen, is popularly used to embrace a variety of materials,* including application proper, suggestions for practical guidance, and persuasive appeal.

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* Comp. on the different methods of preparation and delivery Part IV, chap. 1.

† Vinet, p. 323.

(1.) Application, in the strict sense, is that in which we show how the subject applies to the persons addressed, what practical instructions it offers them, what practical demands it makes upon them. Sometimes this is effected by means of what are called *remarks*, meaning certain noticeable matters belonging to or connected with the subject, to which attention is now especially directed. Remarks in concluding a sermon, ought always to be of a very practical character. Whatever truth a sermon may present to the mind, it should not end without aiming to bring about some practical result, some corresponding determination of the will, state of the affections, or course of action. If this be true, many of the remarks we hear in the conclusion of sermons are inappropriate, or at least scarcely desirable, for they often consist of certain thoughts loosely connected with the subject discussed, for which no place was found in the discussion. Such conclusions would seem to be among the most unfortunate that can be contrived, for they scatter where there ought to be concentration, and they lead the hearer carelessly to survey the subject from a distance, when he ought to be drawn into close personal contact with it.† If such disjointed observations are really important, and yet the plan of the discourse was not fortunate enough to embrace them, it would be better to throw them in just at the close of the discussion, and give afterwards an appropriate conclusion. When, however, remarks are of a practical character, and have a sufficiently close relation to the subject and to each other, they constitute a good conclusion to the sermon.

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* See above, Part I, chap. 8. As application is often made elsewhere than in the conclusion, sometimes, indeed, forming a large portion of the sermon, and as some of the topics usually embraced under it demanded considerable explanation, the subject was considered under the head of Materials, and that chapter should be here compared.

† Kidder appears to justify this sort of thing, when he says (Hom. p. 223), "Another design of a conclusion is to express thoughts which do not belong to any other part of the discourse. In the elaboration of a plan, disposition usually distributes to the conclusion pertinent and important matter that has no place in either the exordium or the argument."

This application more frequently takes the form of *inferences.* In England two centuries ago, from the passion for logical analysis in preaching,* it was common to make a great number of inferences in concluding, "sometimes twelve, sometimes twenty, and sometimes fifty. These were called *uses*, (1) *of information* — (2) *of instruction* — (3) *of examination* — (4) *of reproof* — (5) *of encouragement* — (6) *of comfort* — (7) *of exhortation*, and so on." † This was of course ruinous to all properly oratorical effect. But even at the present day, the same tendency to think more of instruction in preaching than of practical impression, which leads many still to employ much formal division and subdivision, likewise leads, in some quarters, to a great fondness for closing with "inferences." This form of making application of the subject ought to be in two directions carefully limited. Nothing should be presented as an inference which does not logically and directly follow from the subject discussed. The former practice of greatly multiplying so-called inferences has led to a certain looseness in the homiletical application of the term, which ought to be avoided.‡ The other limit is, that no inferences should be drawn in concluding a sermon which are not of practical importance. It is not the preacher's business to exhibit all the matters which may be inferred from his discussion, as if he were attempting an exercise in logic, but to draw out such as are of real importance. And observe that this should be a *practical* importance. The body of the discourse has furnished the intellect with instruction and argument; what we want in concluding is, as remarked above, something which appeals to the affections and the will.* In the body of the discourse there may, of course, be inference of truths not in this sense practical, but forming a part of the argument. The conclusion, except in rare cases, ought to deal only in truths having a directly practical bearing. Shedd points out that inferences forming a conclusion ought to be *homogeneous* and *cumulative.* The several inferences, that is to say, ought to sustain a similar relation to the subject, so as to blend into one effect; and the successive inferences ought to increase in weight, heat, and life, so as to make the greatest impression at the close. They should generally be brief. Yet sometimes it is proper to make a short statement of some doctrinal principle or abstract truth, and then occupy the discourse mainly with practical inferences from it; but in such cases they belong to the body of the discourse, which ends either with the last inference, or with some separate conclusion.

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* Comp. above, § 2. † Robinson's ed. of Claude, II, 457.

‡ Comp. above, Part I, chap. 6, § 2, On deduction from established truths.

Again, this application is often best presented in the form of *lessons.* This term implies that the practical teachings of the subject are more thoroughly brought out and more fully applied than would be indicated by mere "remarks," while it does not restrict the application to those teachings which appear as logical "inferences" from the propositions established. It would thus seem to have considerable advantages over the other forms. Such "lessons" must, of course, be thoroughly practical, and must not be too formal, nor have a magisterial air. The preacher is not a dignitary, speaking *ex cathedra* to his inferiors. He had better speak, in general, of lessons which *we* may learn.

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* Comp. Shedd, p. 198–204, a very instructive discussion.

Of course there are applications which it would not be proper to designate by any one of these terms, remarks, inferences, or lessons. And of course it is by no means necessary, and frequently not advisable, to use these somewhat formal phrases, even where they are appropriate. The preacher must, in the mode of presenting applications, study naturalness, simplicity, and variety.

(2.) Another subdivision of what is popularly called application, consists of suggestions as to the best means and methods of practically performing some duty which the body of the discourse has enjoined. After urging the obligation to such duties as family or secret prayer, or reading the Scriptures, private efforts for the conversion of individuals, kindness to the poor, etc., it is extremely appropriate to end with practical suggestions as to the way in which the work may be actually done, by people having nothing extraordinary in their character or circumstances — done regularly, habitually, and with good results. Many a Christian duty seems to most people impracticable for *them;* and the most effective application in such cases is to show that it is practicable. Usually this should not be done in the way of objurgation, as if wishing simply to take away their excuses for neglect, but with a sympathizing recognition of real difficulties which are "common to man." Here again we see that explanations and suggestions, which are to form a *conclusion*, must be comparatively brief. If it is deemed proper to make them copious, they ought commonly to be thrown into the body of the discourse.

(3.) Application includes not merely a statement of the practical bearings of the discourse upon the hearers, and instruction as to the actual performance of duties enjoined, but it also includes, and often especially denotes, *persuasive* *appeal.* The nature and means of persuasion and hortatory appeal we have perhaps sufficiently considered in a previous chapter.* It is very natural that conclusions should often consist of persuasion and entreaty. Unless the whole discourse is of this character, such matter must, if given anywhere, be most commonly put at the close. And such is human nature, that in treating the great majority of subjects we find it desirable, not merely to enlighten and convince, but also to urge and beseech.

But it is quite wrong to suppose, as some preachers appear to do, that every sermon must end with a very pathetic or overwhelming appeal. It is not unfrequently best to end quietly, yet still so as to impress. And whatever the subject might require, let a man not speak in an emotional manner unless he really feels it. An effort to work oneself up into feeling, because it is desirable at this point, will usually fail; and if it succeeds as to the preacher himself, will be apt to make anything else than a good impression on the hearers. If an impassioned conclusion was prepared, and the speaker now finds that his own feelings and those of the audience have slowly subsided till there is no good prospect of exciting them, let him omit the prepared conclusion, or modify its tone so as to attempt nothing but what can be achieved. Few things are so painful or so injurious as the reaction produced by passionate words which are not felt by the hearers, nor even by the speaker. And let it never be forgotten that we must not aim to excite emotion merely for its own sake, as if that were the end in view, but to make it a means of determining the will and stimulating to corresponding action. Even love to God will not subsist as a mere feeling.

A concluding exhortation ought, as a rule, to be specific, keeping itself in relation to the subject which has been treated. There is great danger that a fluent and fervid speaker will wander into mere general appeals, equally appropriate to almost any other subject or occasion. This may be sometimes allowable, but a more specific exhortation would almost always be more effective. It was once very common, among Baptists, Methodists, and some others, for a sermon to be followed by an exhortation from some other minister, or from some private Christian. The practice is now generally disused, except in " protracted meetings," but if properly managed, may be, upon occasion, quite appropriate and really useful. It would be an excellent thing to startle some of our congregations out of their decorous dulness, by an unexpected and rousing exhortation. But such addresses should not break away from the sermon, nor lose themselves in vague generalities. They should in general carry the subject, or some branch of it, farther in the same direction. If no train of thought presents itself which would be of this character, then let the speaker take some thought which, though not included in the sermon, will harmonize with it in general effect — so that the whole service may impel the hearers in the same direction. One who undertakes such exhortation ought not merely to feel moved to speak, but by all means to have something definite in his mind which he wishes to say, and ought especially to beware of wearying the audience.

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* Part I, chap. 8.

When the sermon has been one of warning or of invitation, it is sometimes natural and impressive to conclude with something of the opposite tendency. The preacher must judge in every case, whether this combination will deepen the general impression, or whether the two will neutralize each other in the hearer's mind, and leave him unaffected by either. It may be added that warnings, and all that is alarming in gospel truth, should be uttered not as if we delighted in denunciation, but with especial ten derness, showing that we speak in the faithfulness of love.

The length of the conclusion, like that of the introduction, is dependent on circumstances, and no rule can be laid down. But there is great danger of making it too long, especially in hortatory appeals. The feeling of the speaker inclines him to continue, but the feelings of the hearers cannot be long kept up to a high point. If the sermon has been long, the conclusion should certainly be brief, save in very peculiar cases. Sometimes the close of the last division really brings the whole train of thought to an end, and gives it a practical turn; any separate conclusion is then unnecessary, and commonly undesirable. Sometimes an abrupt conclusion is very effective, when well managed, with good taste and unaffected solemnity. "Excessive length is a common fault of the conclusion of extemporaneous preachers and writers; in fact, of all who do not govern themselves both in the preparation and delivery of sermons by well-defined plans. New thoughts occur to them, and they are hitched on to what has gone before. What is worse, sometimes the preacher becomes conscious that he has failed to accomplish the object of his discourse, or to awaken the degree of interest he ought to have excited, and he struggles on in the vain endeavor to compensate the fault, until at last he is forced to terminate further from his object than when his conclusion began."* Most of all is it unwise to give indication that one is about to conclude, and then start again, or keep dragging on.

The general character of the conclusion ought to be determined before the detailed composition (whether written or unwritten) of the discourse is begun. Then the development of the details may be suitably limited and directed by the use which it is proposed to make of the whole in concluding. If the other materials have been provided and arranged, and no conclusion has yet suggested itself — a thing which will not often happen — we may look again over the train of thought drawn out, asking ourselves distinctly the question what will be the most suitable conclusion to all this. Or perhaps a renewed examination of the text, or of its connection, or of parallel passages, will furnish something suitable. The problem is not to find some conclusion, but that which will be most appropriate and effective. It is plain that the conclusion cannot be composed in detail, till we reach it in composing the discourse. In fact, some better conclusion than was originally contemplated may have presented itself in the course of composition, which it is proper to substitute. And the same thing may happen in the course of delivery. The great requisite is, that the body of the discourse and the conclusion shall each be adapted to the other; and this may be accomplished by fixing the general contents and design of the conclusion when laying out the plan of the discourse; and then allowing the style and tone of the conclusion to be modified, or its very character changed, in any way that may have been suggested in the progress of composition, or of delivery.

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* Kidder, p. 229–30.

The *final words* of the conclusion may sometimes consist of a comprehensive and impressive restatement of the subject which has been discussed. "It is very effective when, in our final appeal, we can strongly and vividly reproduce the leading idea of the whole discourse. It has a very great effect upon our hearers, after so many solid proofs and so many skilful strokes of oratory have been devoted to it, to see the great leading truth, the parent idea, appear once more at this crowning moment in all the force of its beautiful simplicity, in all the strength of its unity." * Or the text itself may be the last words. When the discourse has been developed out of the text, and has exhibited all its wealth of meaning, then the emphatic repetition of the text in closing will impressively sum up all that has been said. Or we may end with another passage of Scripture, or with part of a hymn, or with an invocation of the divine blessing. This last is sometimes natural and impressive, but should never become a regular form. Very often, however, the general contents or design of the conclusion will require that we close with some particular thought. The last sentence, of whatever it may consist, ought to be appropriate and impressive, but its style ought not to be elaborate and ambitious. It is a very solemn moment. Do not be thinking of your reputation, good brother, but of your responsibility, and of your hearers' salvation.*

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* Potter, p. 228.

CHAPTER III.

DIFFERENT SPECIES OF SERMONS.

§ 1. SUBJECT-SERMONS. § 2. TEXT-SERMONS. § 3. EXPOSITORY SERMONS.

THERE has already been frequent occasion to mention subject-sermons, text-sermons, and expository sermons. It is convenient to give at this point an account of their respective peculiarities, with practical suggestions as to their management.

The distinction between subject-sermons and text-sermons has to do simply with the plan of the discourse, especially with the source of its divisions. It is only in this respect that they constitute different species, and yet the difference is one of considerable practical importance. The phrases in question — for which some substitute topical and textual sermons, or topical and textual division of sermons — have not been generally employed with great precision or uniformity. A very obvious application of them, and one which can be consistently carried through, would be as follows: Subject-sermons are those in which the divisions are derived from the subject, independently of the text; while in text-sermons, the divisions are taken from the text. In the latter case as well as in the former, there may be a definite subject, distinctly and even formally stated; but this subject is not divided according to its own nature, but only such divisions are made as are presented by the text. Sometimes the two plans may coincide. Beginning with a subject, one may find so appropriate a text, that the logical divisions of the subject will all be contained in the text; or beginning with a text, he may state its subject in so felicitous a form of proposition, that the several divisions presented in the text will also constitute a complete logical division of the proposition. But they will not often thus coincide, and the fact that they sometimes do, will not make them less distinct in principle.

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* Besides Shedd, already referred to, the Conclusion is treated at unusual length and in an instructive manner by Hoppin, p. 178-190.

§ 1. SUBJECT-SERMONS.

In subject-sermons, then, we draw from the text a certain subject, usually stating it distinctly in the form of a proposition,* and then the text has no further part in the sermon, but the subject is divided and treated according to its own nature, just as it would be if not derived from a text.

This form of treatment has important advantages. It better insures unity, which is indispensable to the best effects of discourse. It trains the preacher's mind to logical analysis, and few kinds of power are so valuable to him.

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* Comp. above, chap. 2, § 2.

It is more convincing and pleasing to a certain order of minds in the audience, especially among cultivated people; such a treatment having a more logical character, and also a more manifest completeness. Besides, there will often be practical occasion for thus thoroughly discussing a subject. The wants of the congregation will make the preacher wish to present a full view of some doctrine, or some topic of general or particular morality, and not merely the special aspects of it which one text or another may exhibit. The Scriptures do not present truth in a succession of logical propositions, any more than the objects of nature are found grouped according to scientific classification. This suits the design of the Bible, as a book to be read, and also leads to a rich variety in textual preaching. But it is frequently instructive and satisfactory to discuss some collective subject.

It is usually better that the subject should be not general, but specific. This, as we have heretofore seen,* not only promotes variety in successive sermons, but really makes each subject more fruitful. And if in addition to being a theme specific in its logical character, it be *the* specific theme of the text from which it is drawn, this removes, in part, one of the objections to subject-sermons, viz. that in them the text does not perform so important a part as it ought to do in preaching. Too often the text is only a starting-point, with which the sermon afterwards maintains, not only no formal, but no vital connection. Sometimes, indeed, it is made simply a motto, a practice of extremely doubtful propriety. Of course a text which presents a specific aspect of some subject may be lawfully used as suggesting the general subject, or we may draw from a general text its general subject, and then avowedly confine ourselves to one department of it. But as a rule, it is greatly better that the subject should be precisely

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*** Part I, chap. 3, § 1.**

that which the text most naturally presents, and which most thoroughly exhausts its meaning. A good example of such specific subjects is found in Robert Hall's three sermons, Reasons for a judgment to come, Character of the judgment to come, Remembrance in youth of judgment to come.* And a text is in each case taken which is supposed to present the specific topic. The first is Acts 24 : 25, "As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," though this is probably an unwarranted interpretation, as the word properly signifies 'discoursed;' the second is Heb. 6 : 2, "Eternal judgment;" and the third, Eccl. 11 : 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth . . . . . but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Mr. Hall's biographer states that he was fond of thus confining himself to one aspect of a subject. In like manner, South has a number of distinct sermons on Deliverance from Temptation.

The subject will be divided according to its own nature, and to our practical design in treating it.† This design will usually lead us either to explanation (whether by analysis or by comparison), to proof, or to application of the subject, and in many cases will require some combination of these. The practically different methods of dividing are extremely numerous and various, and here the analytical and imaginative powers of the preacher may be freely exercised. The formal and cumbrous methods given in the "Topics" of ancient writers, and applied to preaching by Claude, are now generally disregarded. Indeed, Cicero himself, who abridged Aristotle's treatise on Topics, has elsewhere,‡ after giving a few practical hints as to the divisions of a discourse, spoken as follows "There are also other precepts for division, which are of but little use in oratory; they are employed in philosophy, and I have transferred such of them as seemed to be suitable." This distinction between logical analysis and oratorical division cannot be too earnestly insisted on. Little can be taught with respect to dividing a subject save by examples, and these can be most profitably studied by a critical analysis of published sermons, and a repeated and careful inspection of the plans we have ourselves devised.*

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* Works, IV, 304.

† The character, number, order, etc. of divisions have been discussed above, chap. 2, § 2, 3.

‡ De Invent. I, 23.

Sometimes no complete discussion of the subject is attempted, but we have only a series of remarks upon it. Of course this is not often to be commended.*

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* For this purpose, the best of the old English divines are Barrow and South. Tillotson's plans appear more simple, and thus preferable, but they are often quite defective. Of the great French preachers, Saurin is better in this respect than even Massillon. Subject-sermons in a strict sense are especially frequent among Presbyterian preachers; and probably no sermons in existence present a larger number of excellent models of this kind, than those of Samuel Davies. If the study of one of these older preachers should be tending to make one too formal for the taste of the present age, he can correct the tendency by reading Liddon's University Sermons, or R. Fuller's Sermons, where he will find plans, both topical and textual, which are distinct and clear without being obtrusive or minute. But let it not be imagined that the greatest preachers are faultless in their plans, or even uniformly good. They often prepared hastily, or their minds became possessed by a certain scheme of thought so that they did not perceive its faults, or could not see how to correct them. Andrew Fuller usually divides naturally and well. But his famous sermon on Walking by Faith (Works, Vol. I), though the leading division is simple enough — the nature and the importance of walking by faith — is in its details grievously loose-jointed and awkward. In fact, it was suggested by an incident during his ride to the place of preaching. A rush of good thoughts may come suddenly, as in that case, but very seldom in a good arrangement. It has been already remarked that Spurgeon often gives excellent plans; and he has many subject-sermons, especially in his earlier volumes.

§ 2. Text-sermons.

These ought to be governed by the same general principles as subject-sermons. They must always have a plan, and commonly divisions; and the principles laid down as to divisions in the foregoing chapter apply, in general, to text-sermons as well as others. Text-sermons include two distinct varieties, those which present a single subject, and those which discuss several subjects.

1. A single subject is drawn from the text, and stated, whether formally or informally, and then is discussed under such divisions as the text furnishes. We have seen that this may sometimes coincide with a complete logical division of the subject itself, but in those rare cases it would still be called a text-sermon, if the divisions were actually derived from a contemplation of the text. In general, such plans are quite different from those which a logical analysis of the subject would suggest. Text-sermons of this sort are by some writers quite confounded with subject-sermons, because in both cases there is a definite subject. Others call them textual-topical.

The divisions thus drawn from the text, while not commonly forming a complete analysis of the subject in itself considered, must yet be so related to the subject and to each other, that they together form a structure, a symmetrical whole. Otherwise the discourse is felt to be incomplete and fragmentary.

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* It is not deemed necessary to say more upon subject-sermons, because all that is said in chap. 2 of divisions applies directly to them. A preacher who shrinks from preaching sermons of this sort should constrain himself to make them, at least somewhat frequently, for the sake of his mental discipline and of due variety.

A well-constructed text-sermon of this kind has most of the advantages possessed by subject-sermons, and the great additional advantage that it is much more intimately in contact with the text, drawing from it not only the subject treated but all the leading thoughts of the treatment. This method, accordingly, is very largely adopted. It gives ample opportunity for variety, freshness, originality. "A tact is needed in the preacher, to discover the hidden skeleton. This tact will be acquired gradually and surely, by every one who carefully cultivates himself in all homiletic respects. Like all nice discernment, it comes imperceptibly in the course of training and discipline, and therefore no single and particular rule for its acquisition can be laid down. It must be acquired, however, or the fundamental talent for textual sermonizing will be wanting. Moreover, this tact should be judicious. It is possible to find more meaning in a text than it really contains . . . . This talent for detecting the significance of Scripture, must be confined to the gist of it — to the evident and complete substance of it."* The German preachers, who have to preach many times in successive years upon the same passage, often show great ingenuity in striking out new plans for the same text, plans which shall make a complete section of the whole passage, but in a new direction. "Take, for example, the history of Peter's denial. I can set out either from the fact of the denial itself, considering it as to its causes, its consequences, etc.; or from the danger into which one gets who warms himself with the world; or from the thought that in this world everything helps when a disciple is to be brought to fall; or from the repentance of Peter, which presupposes as well love, as weakness of love; or I can set forth the power of the love of Jesus in his look at Peter, a) how it humbles him, better than law and penalty could do, b) how it makes a new man of him. In all five sermons the whole of the text would have place, but every time in a different light."* "One of our Lord's miracles of healing may be considered either from the point of view of the Divine grace glorifying itself in this history, in which case Christ's mode of action is made to illustrate that of God (for example, he delays, indeed, with his help, but at last he does help); or the history may be chiefly considered from the ethical stand-point, and then Christ is the example according to which we are to act in similar cases; or finally, we consider the conduct of the persons themselves on whom the healing is performed, who are set before us as an example of faith (for example, the centurion of Capernaum)."† Among English preachers, Melvill is famous for the ingenuity with which he develops a rich meaning from passages which to most persons would suggest nothing.

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* Shedd, p. 152.

Here, as in the case of subject-sermons, we hear sometimes merely a series of "observations" or "remarks" upon the subject, which could hardly be called divisions of it. The following example is from Beddome: Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" 1. It is the general character of unconverted men to be of a persecuting spirit. 2. Christ has his eye upon persecutors. 3. The injury done to Christ's people, Christ considers as done to himself. 4. The calls of Christ are particular.‡ The fourth might be omitted. Such remarks suggested by the text would seem a more satisfactory treatment than topical remarks, but one should not very often allow himself to construct sermons in so loose a fashion.

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* Palmer, Hom. s. 378.

† Hagenbach, s. 120. Comp. the plans of Krummacher, in his David, and the sermons on the Temptation of Christ by Krummacher and by Monod, in Fish's "Select Discourses from the French and German."

‡ Quoted by Shedd, p. 150.

The preacher must exercise his judgment with reference to every particular discourse, as to whether it is better to make a textual division of the subject, or to treat the subject independently, according to its own nature.*

2. In other text-sermons, there is not one definite and comprehensive subject, but several topics presented by the text are successively treated. These, though they do not admit of being combined into one, ought to have such a mutual relation as to give the discourse unity. The same sentence of Scripture might suggest several entirely distinct topics, and a sermon upon these would be really several sermons in succession. A discourse that has not unity, both offends taste and lacks power — in fact, is not a discourse at all. The unity, however, may be that of subject or of person or of place, provided in the latter cases there be also some internal connection, so that all may blend in the general effect of the discourse. Thus topics apparently so diverse as suicide, ingratitude, avarice and remorse, might all be treated in a sermon upon Judas, because they not only pertain to the one person, but were in his case intimately connected, as will be apparent from stating them in a different order, avarice, ingratitude, remorse, suicide. After pointing out that in him they were thus connected, one might even treat of them in some other order, if oratorically more convenient, and the topics though separate, would at least seem tied together into a kind of unity. Such an example shows that it is allowable to go quite far in this direction; but as a rule, we ought to have as close an internal relation among the

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* Some preachers, for example South, are very fond of sermons which draw some divisions directly from the text, but others from the nature of the subject. This might seem an incongruous mixture. but is often well-managed and effective.

parts of the discourse as possible. It is the great fault of this variety of text-sermons that they are apt to be desultory and rambling, to resemble the scattering fire of irregular soldiers, rather than the systematic and concentrated discharge of a disciplined body. We avoid this fault by refusing to include in the sermon any topic suggested by the text which will not take its place in a connected series, though the topic in itself might be interesting and instructive.

In both these varieties, especially in the second, the divisions may sometimes be stated in the very words of the text. Thus, *The young convert commended to God*, JUDE 24. 1. That is able to keep you from falling; 2. And to present you, (1) faultless, (2) before the presence of his glory, (3) with exceeding joy. GAL. 5 : 6, *What it is that in Christ Jesus avails.* 1. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. 2. But (1) faith, (2) which worketh, (3) by love. The *order* of the clauses may be varied, if deemed oratorically more suitable. LUKE 24 : 43. 1. Thou shalt be *in Paradise.* 2. Thou shalt be *with me* in Paradise. 3. *To-day* thou shalt be with me in Paradise.* When one thus takes up the successive words or clauses of a text, and "enlarges" upon them, the process closely resembles musical "variations" upon a familiar tune, possessing similar advantages, and being liable to the same faults. It is often so managed as to be wearisome, what Schleiermacher called *spelling* the text; sometimes it is offensive, as when a passage is so dissected as to destroy the very life of it. But when the text is happily chosen, and the treatment, while natural, is fresh, instructive and animated, with a manifest connection in the topics, and a sustained oratorical progress to the end, such a sermon may be highly effective. The people love to have their minds kept in close contact with the text, if it is done in an interesting and impressive way.

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* The plan often pursued with the words, "Why will ye die?' viz. to emphasize each word in succession, is forbidden by the fact that in the original neither 'will' nor 'ye' is separately expressed so that they cannot be taken as in any sense emphatic.

Or the divisions may be stated in different terms, though following the order of the text; or both in different terms and in a different order, if this would give a more oratorical arrangement. The statement must commonly be thus varied, in text-sermons upon a single definite subject; and much will depend upon the skill with which the divisions are drawn from the text and enunciated. EZEK. 11:19, 20, "And I will give them one heart," etc. *Genuine Religion*, developed in four particulars. I. Its author. II. The disposition it produces. III. The obedience it demands. IV. The blessedness it insures.* PSALM 73 : 24, 26. *God is the pious man's all in all.* I. His guide through life. II. His support in death. III. His portion forever. Sometimes very little departure from the words of the text is necessary. ROM. 5 : 1, 2. *The believer's happy state.* I. He has peace with God. II. He stands (i. e. stands fast) in the grace of God. III. He exults in hope of the glory of God.

It often happens that the thoughts of a text can be very thoroughly and neatly drawn out by a series of *questions*, the answers to these forming the divisions of the sermon. Examples of this are familiar.

In treating the details of a text-sermon, it is not necessary to confine ourselves strictly to views presented by the text. Any one of the topics may be developed and applied according to its own nature, or according to the specific design of the sermon. Yet it is always pleasing, when effected without artificiality, to see all the lines of development kept within the limits of the text.

* Jay, quoted by Kidder, p. 206. Jay is particularly fond of this species of sermons, and often felicitous in his plans.

§ 3. EXPOSITORY SERMONS.

The name of this species of sermons is derived from a peculiarity in their materials, viz. the fact that they are mainly occupied with exposition. But their homiletical peculiarities belong to the matter of construction, to that oratorical arrangement and adaptation which should distinguish an expository *sermon* from a commentary or an exegetical essay. The present, therefore, seems to be the appropriate place for discussing this important variety of sermons.*

Almost every preacher one meets, if asked whether he often makes expository discourses, will answer, "No; I have long believed there ought to be more preaching of that kind, but the attempts I formerly made in that direction were quite unsuccessful, and it seems I have no talent for it." But how few have ever fairly tried to develop such a talent. Men labor for years to acquire the power of producing a good topical sermon. All their rhetorical training, and all their practice, is directed to that end. Then they try the experiment of expository preaching, which requires a different kind of practice, and perhaps even a different method of studying the Scriptures, and wonder that their first attempts prove a comparative failure. This is as unreasonable as the course of those who, after training themselves to read sermons, make a timid and ill-prepared effort to preach without writing, and infer from the almost inevitable failure that they have no talent for extemporizing.

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* This discussion is in the main identical with an article in the Baptist Quarterly for Jan. 1869. It may be allowable to embrace the opportunity for remarking, that every minister ought to take at least one religious Quarterly, and if but one, of course that of his own denomination. To read regularly for several years the fresh, vigorous and instructive articles of such a Review as that mentioned, will greatly aid the minister in getting into the current of contemporary thought, and in the meantime will supply not a little of good material for preaching.

1. It is not thought necessary to discuss at any length the advantages and disadvantages of expository preaching. The former are to some extent obvious and generally recognized, and they have been admirably presented by Alexander, in his Thoughts on Preaching.* As stated by him, they are as follows:

(1.) This method better corresponds with the very idea and design of preaching. (2.) It is the primitive and ancient method. (3.) It insures a better knowledge of the Scriptures, on the part of preacher and hearers — and of the Scriptures in their connection. (4.) It causes sermons to contain more of pure Scripture truths, and scriptural modes of viewing things. (5.) It gives occasion for remarking on many passages of the Bible which otherwise might never enter into one's sermons; and for giving important practical hints and admonitions which might seem to some hearers offensively personal if introduced into a topical discussion, but which are here naturally suggested by the passage in hand. (6.) And it greatly diminishes the temptation to misinterpret texts by excessive allegorizing, by "accommodation," etc.; for men are often driven into such misinterpretation by the difficulty of finding for every sermon a short passage which will legitimately afford the requisite amount of material.†

It might be more desirable to discuss the objections to this method, for these often appear more serious than they really are. There is, in many quarters, a popular prejudice against expository preaching, arising from the fact that it is so often badly managed, and from the notion that it is a labor-saving contrivance. On rainy Sundays, or on week-nights, the preacher who has no sermon prepared, or wishes to save his elaborate preparation for a more auspicious occasion, will frequently undertake to "read a passage of Scripture, and make a few remarks;" feeling that this enterprise is attended by no risk, because, as some quaint old preacher expressed it, if he is "persecuted in one verse, he can flee to another." Hence the people rather naturally conclude that whenever one takes a long text, it is an expedient to dispense with labor. Besides this prejudice against the method, which a judicious and laborious preacher can soon overcome, it has inherent disadvantages. Our people, it is to be regretted, seldom follow that excellent Scottish fashion, of keeping a Bible in hand during the sermon; and so they find it hard to remember the general drift and connection of the long text, as they are accustomed to do with a short one. This difficulty one must bear in mind, seeking to overcome it as far as possible. Some persons, too, in our extremely restless age, object to *continuous* exposition on the ground that it lacks variety; they grow tired of hearing the preacher, Sunday after Sunday, announce the same book and perhaps the same chapter. Others really care so little about the Bible that they take no interest in explanations of it; they wish the preacher to make his text merely a point of departure, and to give them "something fresh." Others object that the expository sermon cannot present those connected arguments in which the human mind so greatly delights; but it may trace and unfold the argument of an inspired writer, which ought to be more interesting than one constructed by the preacher himself. If it be still further objected that a discourse which is mainly or largely occupied with explanation of the text, can leave but little room for application, we may answer that the impressiveness of an application depends very largely upon the interest which the hearers have been previously brought to feel in the subject applied; and that a brief, and even unexpected application or appeal is often more impressive than one which gives notice, and throws men on the defensive.

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* Page 272–313.

† On the advantages of expository preaching, compare Wayland, Ministry of the Gospel, p. 83–6.

Shedd takes the ground * that "there is somewhat less call for expository preaching than there was before the establishment of Sabbath schools and Bible classes." He adds, however, that "it is the duty of the preacher, occasionally, to lay out his best strength in the production of an elaborate expository sermon, which shall not only do the ordinary work of a sermon, which shall not only instruct, awaken, and move, but which shall also serve as a sort of guide and model for the teacher of the Sabbath school and the Bible class." But it is worthy of inquiry whether the Sunday-school teaching does not actually prepare people to receive expository preaching with higher appreciation and profit. The great difficulty in the way of making it effective is not knowledge of Scripture but ignorance of it. One sometimes fancies he could point out, after preaching to a congregation of strangers, those who are engaged in the regular study of the Bible, from the greater interest with which they listened to any explanations of Scripture that may have occurred in the sermon. Robert Hall found his regular Sunday morning expository sermon very acceptable at Cambridge; but at Leicester he lamented to a friend that the congregation, being generally less intelligent, could not be brought to like this method, and he was annoyed at having to change his habit, and hunt up two separate texts for every Sunday.

2. But the thing here specially proposed is to offer practical *suggestions as to the proper management* of expository preaching. It is in several respects a peculiar variety of discourse, requiring peculiar treatment; and yet the treatises of Homiletics, while never failing to urge that this method has great advantages, seldom furnish the stu-

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* Hom. p. 157.

dent with any directions for his guidance in attempting it. The hints which follow are derived from some experience and observation, from conversation with other ministers, and from the study of the best specimens within reach.

An expository discourse may be defined as one which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture. It by no means excludes argument and exhortation as to the doctrines or lessons which this exposition develops. It may be devoted to a long passage, or to a very short one, even a part of a sentence. It may be one of a series, or may stand by itself. We at once perceive that there is no broad line of division between expository preaching and the common methods, but that one may pass by almost insensible gradations from textual to expository sermons.* We see, too, that men often preach expository sermons which they would not call by that name. Moreover, it is common to apply the term only to discourses upon the doctrinal, preceptive, and devotional portions of the Bible, and not to those which treat of the narrative portions. Now the methods of exposition appropriate to Scripture history are of course quite different from those applied to the other portions. But whenever the discourse is not merely a discussion of certain thoughts suggested by a Scripture story or scene, but in the first place spends much time in bringing out clearly and vividly the scene or story itself, that is really historical exposition. And this is surely a highly important class of expository discourses. A very large portion of the Bible consists of narrative, and in this as in other respects the Bible is adapted to its purpose; for narrative possesses an unfailing interest, for old and young, cultivated and ignorant, converted and unconverted. But sermons on historical passages are very apt to err, in one of two directions. In the one case the preacher makes haste to deduce from the narrative before him a subject, or certain doctrines or lessons, and proceeds to discuss these precisely as if he had drawn them from some verse in Romans or the Psalms; thus sinking the narrative, with all its charm, completely out of sight. In the other case, he indulges in a vast amount of the often ridiculous thing called "word-painting," overlaying the simple and beautiful Scripture story with his elaborate descriptions, and showing no desire, or having no time, to give us any glimpse of the lessons which the narrative teaches. There is certainly a middle course. Without consuming our time in exhibiting overwrought pictures of his own, the preacher may seek to throw light on the Bible picture, so as to make us see it plainly and vividly, and may either indicate the lessons as he advances from point to point or group them in the latter part of his discourse. What we insist on is, that there ought to be such a method of preaching upon the narrative portions of Scripture as should be distinctively appropriate to narrative, while yet it is preaching.*

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* Nearly all that has been said above, § 2, upon text-sermons, applies directly to expository preaching. See also § 1, 2, plan of discourse.

(1.) What now is the prime requisite to the effectiveness of an expository sermon? Our answer must be, unity. Unity in a discourse is necessary to instruction, to conviction, and to persuasion. Without it, the taste of enlightened hearers cannot be satisfied, and even the uncultivated, though they may not know why, will be far less deeply impressed. But unity in an expository discourse is by many preachers never aimed at. They conceive of it as a mere series of disjointed remarks upon the successive verses. It was to this kind of "homilies" that Schleiermacher referred, when he said that they are composed of little sermons of the common form tacked together.* But it is not at all necessary that an expository sermon should exhibit this fault. "The difficulty as to unity, presented by this kind of discourse, never amounts to impossibility. We do not at random cut from the general text of the sacred book, the particular text of a homily. The selection is not arbitrary. The limit of the text is predetermined by reference to unity, which, therefore, we shall be at no loss to discover in it."† In making a single, detached expository discourse, one can easily see to it that the passage selected shall have unity. In *continuous* exposition of the same book, it may sometimes be necessary to take a passage in which this is not the case; but even then, we may gather from it such thoughts as can be framed into one plan, and pass over the remainder, or notice them very briefly. Let there be unity at whatever cost. And not only this, but structure. Thanks to the influence of the schoolmen, the modern mind greatly delights in analysis, and in the regular construction of the materials which analysis has furnished, and hence the great preference of many for topical discourses. The homilies left us by the fathers are frequently quite deficient in respect of orderly structure, and sometimes even destitute of unity. And some persons appear to imagine that we can have no "homilies" except upon the model of the fathers, and with a total disregard of modern taste and modes of thought. But a discourse upon an extended passage of Scripture well chosen and well handled, may have a definite topic, and a distinct and orderly plan, and yet not fail to be an expository discourse, dealing largely in explanation of the text. Let us carefully observe, then, that an expository sermon may have, and must have, both unity and an orderly structure; for the frequent practical neglect of these requisites is one principal cause of those failures to which allusion was made at the outset.

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* Comp. on historical subjects, Part I, chap. 3, § 3, and on description, Part I, chap. 5, § 1.

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* Palmer, Hom. s. 380.

† Vinet, p. 148; comp. Shedd, p. 158.

(2.) When an inexperienced preacher begins to think of attempting expository preaching, his mind is very apt to turn at once toward the idea of continuous exposition. He must get up a series.* But why should not the preacher first discipline himself in this kind of preaching, and accustom his congregation to it, by the exposition, every now and then, of detached passages? It will be time enough for a series when he has gained a little more practice, yea, and has made repeated and very mature study of the book to be handled. And let it be urged that first attempts shall not be made upon a Psalm, as is very generally the case; for with occasional exceptions, the Psalms are comparatively lacking in manifest unity, and in distinct connection and regular progress, so that it requires practice to handle them successfully. It will also sometimes be well to take an extended passage and merely make a text-sermon on a long text, gathering several thoughts from it and handling them as in the ordinary text-sermon upon a short text. Or a brief text may be announced, and the sermon be occupied with a discussion of the entire paragraph in which it stands. This indeed is often done by men who have no thought that they are preaching expository sermons. By such means the people cease to imagine that expository preaching is entirely different from other methods, and become accustomed and attached to all alike. Then, whenever a series is attempted, there will be little feeling of strangeness about it, and much less difficulty in sustaining the interest.

(3.) We turn now to the case of continuous exposition.

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* The author has recollections, more vivid than pleasing, of a first attempt, which consisted in a series upon Colossians, and which was declared by a preacher's best adviser to have been on the whole a decided failure.

Here, as has been intimated, the first thing to be done is to make a careful study beforehand of the entire book, or other portion of Scripture to which the series is to be devoted. To view every book as a whole, to grasp its entire contents, and then trace in detail the progress of its narrative or argument, is a method of Scripture study far too little practised. It is one of the benefits of expository preaching that it compels the preacher to study in this way. We may say in general, that no man will succeed in expository preaching unless he delights in exegetical study of the Bible, unless he loves to search out the exact meaning of its sentences, phrases, words. In order to this, a knowledge of the original languages of Scripture is of course exceedingly desirable, but it is by no means indispensable. Andrew Fuller, who dealt largely and successfully in this method of preaching, had substantially no knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and his writings were devoted not to commentary, but to didactic and polemic theology. Yet he loved to study the very words of Scripture. In all his works it is manifest that he did not content himself with gathering the general meaning of a passage, but was exceedingly anxious to know its exact meaning. One of the most eloquent Baptist ministers of America, who died twenty years ago, was never so happy, so charming, as in expository sermons. He too was unacquainted with Greek and Hebrew, and was not liberally supplied with commentaries; but he loved, above all things, to ponder and to talk about the meaning of God's word. There appears to have been a change in this respect which is to be lamented. We have a great multiplication of commentaries, and an immense amount of more or less real study of the Scriptures in Sunday Schools, we have many more ministers than formerly who know something of the original languages, but there is reason to fear that the close, thoughtful, lovingly patient study of the Bible is less common among the ministry now than it once was As to conversation about the meaning of this or that passage, such as once abounded when preachers were thrown together, it has gone out of fashion. A man who should raise such a question now among a group of ministers, sojourning together during the session of some association or convention, would be almost stared at. It will not do to say that we manage these questions better at home among our books. He who most zealously uses his books, at the same time thinking for himself as every man that is a man will do, finds the largest number of points arising, upon which the books utterly disagree or are unsatisfactory, and concerning which he would like to compare views with intelligent brethren. But not to dwell further upon this opinion, it is proper earnestly to insist that one great reason why many ministers find expository preaching difficult is, that they have not been sufficiently accustomed to *study* the Bible. Our rapid general reading is very useful, our devotional reading of brief portions is indispensable to personal piety, but the downright study of Scripture is too often confined to the texts for next Sunday, and their immediate context. The first thing to do, then, after determining to give a series of expository sermons upon a book, or other portion of Scripture, is to study it all over in advance, with some of the best *explanatory* commentaries, and with especial attention to the general contents and connection. To commit the book to memory would be no bad idea, but at any rate one should get the whole train of thought or series of facts, from beginning to end, firmly fixed in his mind.

Next, it would be well to mark out a scheme of sermons covering the whole ground. Previous experience in the exposition of detached passages will enable one to do this without any great difficulty, and of course there can be alterations, if occasion for them should arise in the progress of the series. The great advantage of making out the scheme in advance is, that we can thus distribute most judiciously the several topics of the book. In Romans, for example, various subjects are alluded to in the first three chapters, which are afterwards treated at some length. It would be awkward if one should go into any general discussion of these topics at the point of their first occurrence. They ought to be briefly handled there, and reserved for more extensive remark where they are introduced again. It would very rarely be advisable, however, to promise at the outset a definite number of discourses. Indeed, it is not always best to *announce* a series at all. It may be added that one must beware of going too slowly. Let there be manifest progress, such as the restless spirit of our generation requires. But we may pause upon any specially interesting sentence or phrase, even to the extent, in some cases, of devoting a whole sermon to it. Thus there will be variety as well as progress; and hearers will be gratified to perceive that the preacher marks out passages, not according to their mere external dimensions, but according to the richness of their available contents.

(4.) But now the particular discourse is to be constructed. The passage before us has unity, and we note the heads which it presents, as we should do in a textual sermon. Thus we shall have a structure, a discourse, and not a scattering talk. But one of the principal difficulties in the entire task now presents itself, the *proper handling of the details.* If we simply take the topic and the heads which the passage affords, and proceed to discuss them in our own way, that is not an expository sermon, but a text-sermon. The exposition of some passages, particularly in the hands of some men, will constantly tend towards this form, and often with advantage. But what we are supposed to be aiming at, is a strictly expository sermon, in which not only the leading ideas of the passage are brought out, but its details are suitably explained, and made to furnish the chief material of the discourse. In order to manage this, we need to study the details thoroughly, so as to master them, instead of being oppressed by them. We thus, too, enter more fully into the spirit of the passage, as the musician must who makes variations on a theme. Then we must select and group. Here the inexperienced preacher often errs. Having minutely studied the details of the passage, and become interested in them, he desires to remark upon a greater number of points than the limits of his discourse will allow. Thus it becomes so crowded that the hearer follows with annoying difficulty, and none of the numerous points presented have time to impress themselves upon his mind. It is indispensable to select. Of course one will aim to choose such details as especially require explanation, and such as will at the same time yield important or interesting matter. Often points of no great intrinsic importance, slight traits in the narrative, or minor links in the argument, will add greatly to the vivacity and vigor of the discourse. Every one knows that in oratorical description we must seek the kind of excellence which is seen in certain descriptions by Demosthenes and Tacitus, or in Retzsch's Outlines — a few lines and touches, but those few eminently suggestive and stimulating to the imagination. Is there not something similar in the oratorical exposition of an argument? Must we not labor, besides exhibiting the outlines, the prominent thoughts of our passage, to choose out those details which will cause the whole argument to stand forth in its completeness? Remember, we are not preparing a commentary, nor a dogmatic treatise, but an expository *sermon*, and the whole treatment must be, in the good sense of that word, oratorical. In this respect, as in everything else pertaining to the art of discourse, practical effort, controlled by just principles, will not fail to bring skill.

A mistake sometimes made consists in the unduly multiplied and extended *quotation of parallel passages.* Thus the details of the text, too numerous themselves perhaps for oratorical purposes, are each surrounded by a mass of other passages, and the discourse is so loaded down as to be past endurance. The Lectures of M'Ghee on Ephesians, which are in some respects good, err in this direction very sadly. It is a fault sometimes observed in other than expository sermons, though in these the temptation to it is particularly great. It is so easy for a preacher to persuade himself that he is putting honor upon Scripture, by quoting thus largely, when sometimes he is only putting honor upon his own indolence.* Of course, *judicious* quotation from other parts of Scripture is highly appropriate and often exceedingly valuable, and we need not sympathize with the fastidiousness of Foster, any more than with the opposite extreme.

There is also danger of error as to the *treatment of difficult passages* occurring in the text. The preacher will, of course, study these with great care, for he cannot afford, as regards his personal habits, to slide over difficulties. But having thus become much interested in this difficult portion of his text, having become familiar with the different views which have been suggested, and the arguments for one view and against another, he very naturally feels disposed to use the matter so laboriously wrought out, to discuss the question which appears so interesting. In this way many an expository sermon has been ruined. True, wherever the preacher is really able to clear up the difficulty, and to do this by a comparatively brief and evidently satisfactory explanation, people will be glad to hear it. If he can show that the passage, as thus explained, presents some interesting and valuable truth, they will be delighted. If it is a passage which has been made prominent in religious controversies, or has on any account attracted extraordinary attention, they might even like to hear something of the process by which this satisfactory explanation has been reached. But such cases are comparatively rare; and in general, men grow weary of a long discussion of some *quaestio vexatissima* or *locus difficillimus.* If the preacher, by long study and a brief statement of the results, can throw any light on such a passage, very well; but the long study is his affair, not theirs. This is only one of many directions in which preachers are apt to err, in thinking the people will be interested by everything that interests them. And then, where the result of his researches is not satisfactory, where he does not feel that he can make the matter plain, let the preacher merely notice that there is a difficulty here, and pass on to speak of truths which the passage certainly does teach, to handle what he is confident he understands.* It is a complaint often made against the commentaries, that they say much about the easy places, and little about the hard ones. Now where the book is designed, not so much for explanation as for comment, in the strict sense of that term — and this is the case with most of the older works — it is obviously proper for the writer to spend his time in developing and applying the teachings of those passages which he understands. He has no right to develop and apply what he is not confident is the true meaning. Quite similar is the case of the expository preacher. To state at great length several different views as to the meaning of a passage, without being able to show cause why any one of them should be accepted or preferred, and then leave the matter in that unsatisfactory position, is tiresome in a book, and in a sermon intolerable.

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* The practice is well satirized by Coquerel, p. 69.

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* A celebrated Professor of Greek in one of our American Universities had a youthful assistant, who was one day unexpectedly called on to meet a class, without having read over the lesson. When asked afterwards how he had got through, he said, "I just talked about what I understood, and let alone what I did n't." "Pretty good plan," said the old gentleman; 'I suspect you had better continue to do that as long as you live."

In the progress of an expository discourse, it is often desirable to keep the *connection of the text* before the minds of the audience, by somewhat frequently glancing back, as we proceed, upon the ground already traversed. Chrysostom sets us the example of managing this with skill. He also frequently throws in some lively question as to what comes next, calculated to arouse the hearers, and make them notice it when stated. Our audiences, like his, do not commonly have the sacred text before them, and we must strive to supply the deficiency. By making the leading thoughts of the text quite distinct, by skilfully selecting and grouping the details, and by glancing backward and pointing forward as we proceed, this serious practical difficulty can be to a great extent overcome.

Much pains should be taken to point out and *apply the lessons* which the text may afford. The people need, and desire, to have these distinctly stated, unless the application is exceedingly obvious. It will somewhat frequently be more convenient, particularly in historical exposition, to apply each division of the discourse as it is presented. But in many cases we can do as is common in other sermons, reserve the chief practical lessons for the conclusion. Of course such lessons must, in general, be briefly indicated, as so much time is needed for exposition. But where there is a subject of special practical importance, it may be discussed and urged at length, even if some portions of the text have to be left unexplained. And if current events, or the religious condition of the congregation, should make it particularly desirable to discuss some practical topic which the text does not naturally suggest, it may be introduced in the way of remark, or of remote application of some general truth or duty. Here again, Chrysostom presents us an example. Much as he delighted in explaining Scripture, he yet felt that, in preaching, the practical interest is paramount; and he not only points out many lessons by the way, but is almost sure to find some practical subject for the conclusion, and this is not unfrequently treated at great length. Nor does he trouble himself much as to the association of ideas by which he shall reach any such important practical matter, but often uses a freedom which critics with strict notions of what we call "sermonizing" would be likely to condemn. In his sermon on the Transfiguration, for example, he wants to bear down on the money-lenders there at Antioch, and reaches them as follows: The three disciples were happy in seeing Christ's glory on the mount — we may hope to behold him in a more splendid glory — but if we wish to do so we must take heed what manner of lives we are leading — we must not do this and that, must not oppress the poor — and so he comes to the matter of charging enormous interest, which is then discussed for some time, with vehement denunciation and entreaty. By a still more roundabout process he passes from the feeding of the five thousand to an earnest attack upon the elaborately embroidered and curiously fashioned sandals which were then the rage. And he can frequently return to the same subject, if it seems to require renewed censure or exhortation, managing to bring it in somehow. In one long series of discourses he rarely fails to inveigh against profanity; and his favorite topic of alms-giving may be expected to recur almost anywhere, upon the slightest provocation. Now in all this his example is not faultless, certainly, but it is extremely instructive. We have seen that there is to be desired a much greater unity, and much more of orderly structure and regular progress than is exhibited in Chrysostom's homilies. But the strictest notions in this direction must not prevent us from frequently and freely introducing matters of practical interest. In this way the people will be led to listen much more attentively to our explanations, being constantly on the lookout for some practical application to themselves; and they will also be constantly reminded of what men are so prone to forget the intimate relation between Scripture truth and daily life.* Pastors sometimes shrink from undertaking a series of expository discourses, from the fear that they will not be able to adapt themselves to the precise condition and wants, week after week, of their people; but if the suggestions just made be acted upon, there will in this respect be no difficulty. Besides, where one preaches twice every Sunday, according to the common if not commendable fashion of the present day, he may of course have one sermon free for as much variety of specific adaptation as he pleases.

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* "Expository preaching should aim at direct moral effect. A cold and formal delineation of the course of thought in a portion of the sacred writings, a heartless dissection of its words and phrases without the glow, and feeling, and high religious sensibility of the inspired penman, without ardent love for the souls of men and an earnest desire to bring them to a knowledge of the truth, can answer none of the purposes of expository preaching. It is holding up a cold and mangled corpse instead of the warm and living body. Expository preaching should be regulated by a knowledge of the depths of human nature and should touch the secret springs of the human soul. The Bible itself is remarkable for these characteristics, and it is the greatest of mistakes to imagine that the Bible can be interpreted by a knowledge of words alone. No book has ever gone so deeply into all the windings and corners of the soul and touched so many of the vibrating chords of the heart. To think of spreading out the hidden glories of inspiration by the mere study of languages without the study of man, is like attempting to bring music from the organ by blowing the bellows without touching the keys. It is the lamentable mistake so frequently made on this point, that has often brought expository preaching into disrepute and disuse." Prof. C. E. Stowe, Art. in Biblical Repos Vol. V, p. 388

(5.) One who wishes to cultivate himself as an expository preacher, will of course be disposed to search the literature of the pulpit for good examples of that species of sermons. It may therefore be worth while to mention some specimens which it would be instructive to study, selecting such as are easily accessible.

First, a few good expository sermons on detached passages. Monod on the "Woman of Canaan" (Fish's "Select Discourses from the French and German"), is good. Dr. J. Addison Alexander on Titus ii. 11–15 (Sermons, vol. I), is an admirable specimen of doctrinal and practical exposition. Dr. R. Fuller's discourses on the "Walk to Emmaus," and on the "Three Hebrews in the Furnace" (Sermons), are very fine. Dr. Wayland's "Day in the Life of Jesus of Nazareth," and "Fall of Peter" (Sermons on Salvation by Christ), are of remarkable excellence. Spurgeon on the "Blind Beggar" (Sermons, vol. VI), is more distinctly expository than is common in his sermons.

Passing to specimens of continuous or connected exposition, we mention the following as chiefly *historical.* Krummacher's "Elijah the Tishbite" is hardly equalled by any of his later volumes, except his "David." The "Friends of Christ," by Dr. N. Adams, is a capital volume. Blunt's "Lectures on the History of our Saviour" form a good example for most of us, because they are interesting and profitable, while not exhibiting remarkable abilities. Monod's "Five Sermons on the Apostle Paul" ought by all means to be studied. More distinctly expository than these, and among the most instructive and charming specimens of their class in our recent literature, are Hanna's six small volumes of Lectures on the Life of Christ, republished in this country.

And the following are chiefly *doctrinal or preceptive.* Chalmers on Romans is eminently worthy of study, and is most instructive to those who are best acquainted with his other sermons, and his peculiar cast of mind. Leighton on 1 Peter is famous, and of a beautiful spirit. Luther on Galatians is highly interesting and instructive, and is perhaps the best specimen remaining of those powerful expository sermons by which he wrought so great a work. Cumming's volumes, as on Revelation, on Daniel, on the Parables, etc., are, whatever one may think of his peculiar opinions, excellent models of easy, agreeable and attractive popular exposition. Some of the sermons of F. W. Robertson, as well as his volume on Corinthians, are admirable specimens of a certain kind of exposition; though one cannot be oo careful, in reading any of his works, to guard against his grievous errors as to inspiration and atonement. Ryle's "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels" (several volumes), contain only the substance of sermons, not written out in full, but they are very useful for our purpose. The most instructive example, however, of expository discourse, both doctrinal and historical, is the Homilies of Chrysostom. While no man of sense would think of making discourses now precisely on the model of his, it is remarkable how much may be learned from them as to the skilful, spirited and effective management of expository preaching. Those who have not access to, or cannot read his works in the original, would find it desirable to procure a translation, such as is contained in the Oxford Library of the Fathers. Profound students of his works consider the best of his Homilies to be those on the Psalms and on Matthew. In the former there is necessarily much erroneous interpretation, since he knew no Hebrew, and had to rely on the Septuagint, which in the Psalms is full of errors. The volumes on Matthew are therefore probably the most valuable for our purpose, and these can be obtained at no great cost. One who knows how much interest Andrew Fuller and Robert Hall took in expository preaching, would expect to find profitable examples in their works. But he would be disappointed. Fuller's published expositions on Genesis and on Revelation contain the substance of sermons, and comprise much judicious interpretation and sound thinking; but they give us very little information as to the form of his discourses, and none at all as to his management of details. Still less to the purpose is the report of Hall's sermons on Philippians. The copious "Homiletical and Practical" notes in Lange's Commentaries may be found profitable in expository preaching by those who take pains to use them wisely.

Some of the works in this brief list might not be regarded as expository sermons, according to the common use of that phrase. But we are here claiming for it a wider range than is common, and have insisted that this method of preaching often approximates closely to the other methods.

If the suggestions which have been offered are well founded, it will be obvious that expository preaching is a difficult task. It requires much close study of Scripture in general, and much special study of the particular passage to be treated. To make a discourse which shall be explanatory and yet truly oratorical, bearing a rich mass of details but not burdened with them, full of Scripture and abounding in practical applications, to bring even dull, uninformed and unspiritual minds into interested and profitable contact with an extended portion of the Bible — of course this must be difficult. One cannot say then, as is often said, try expository preaching first on week-nights, till you and the people become accustomed to it. Nay, try it now and then for your principal sermon on Sunday, without mentioning that you are about to do any thing unusual, and lay out your best strength upon an earnest effort to make it at once instructive, interesting, and impressive. Then you and the people will gradually become accustomed to expository preaching as it should be. After repeating, more or less frequently, such occasional efforts, you will know how to prepare for an expository series. He who begins it as an easy thing, will find expository preaching surpassingly difficult; but he who manfully takes hold of it as difficult, will find it grow easier and more pleasant, with every year of his experience. Not every man will find the expository method best suited to his mental endowments. But every one ought to acquire the power of employing it with skill and success. Then, though it be better for this or that man to preach for the most part in other ways, he may continue to introduce expository sermons now and then, and may also infuse a larger expository element into many of his textual and topical sermons. And it may be confidently asserted that many a one who now thinks this method of preaching unsuited to him, needs nothing but diligent study and practice, upon some such principles as have been indicated, to make his expository sermons very profitable to his hearers, and singularly delightful to himself.

PART III.

STYLE.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON STYLE.*

§ 1. NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF STYLE. § 2. MEANS OF IMPROVING STYLE.

§ 1. NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF STYLE.

WE frequently say of a writer, that he wields a ready, an elegant, or a caustic *pen*. In like manner the *stylus*, the pointed iron instrument with which the Romans wrote upon their tablets covered with wax, is often employed by Cicero to denote the manner of writing, the manner of expressing one's thoughts in writing, and at a later period was very naturally extended to speaking. In modern times the use has been still further extended, by analogy, to the fine arts, to dress, and a great variety of matters. A man's style, then, is his characteristic manner of expressing his thoughts, whether in writing or in speech.

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* Besides the general treatises on Rhetoric and Homiletics, on Composition, on Grammar, and on the science of Language, the student will find valuable observations in the Essays on Style by De Quincey, Bulwer (Caxtoniana), and Herbert Spencer (Essays, New York, Appleton), and in Henry Rogers on Sacred Eloquence ("Reason and Faith, and other Essays;" originally in Edinburgh Review, October, 1840).

Every one has his own handwriting, if he writes at all easily and well. Any early imitation of a "copy" will soon be merged in his own individual *style* of writing,—as in this sense also we still call it. And so in the higher sense, every one has his own style. The most slavish imitation could not be perfect; the man's own character will sometimes, in spite of him, modify his style. No writer on the subject fails to quote the saying of Buffon, "The style is the man." This saying Buffon himself curiously illustrated, for his style is marked by a stately and elaborate elegance, and it is stated that he could not write well unless he was in full dress. To the same effect Landor said, "Language is a part of a man's character;" * and Lessing, "Every man should have his own style as he has his own nose." † But here, as everywhere else, that which is most characteristic in a man may be disciplined and indefinitely improved, without losing individuality.

It is not surprising that the term style, as figuratively denoting one's manner of expressing his thoughts, should be used in different cases with a very different extent of meaning. It is sometimes taken to include arrangement, even that of an entire treatise or discourse; and there can certainly be no absolute distinction made between the arrangement of sentences and paragraphs, and that of the discourse. Commonly, however, the general arrangement is not included in the term. On the other hand, style is sometimes distinguished from diction, the latter then denoting one's vocabulary, the character of the words and particular phrases which he employs, while the former would include everything else belonging to his mode of expressing thought. But it is best, according to the usual practice, to include diction as a part of style.

*** Hoppin, p. 230** **† Haven's Rhet p. 241**

Thus understood, style is obviously a matter of very great importance. A man's style cannot be separated from his modes of thought, from his whole mental character. The natural and common image by which we call it the *dress* of thought, is very apt to mislead; for style, as Wordsworth forcibly says, is not the mere dress, it is the *incarnation* of thought. We know another's thoughts, only as thus revealed, thus incarnate.* Aristotle, it is true, speaks slightingly of style, as a subject recently introduced into treatises of rhetoric, which it is to some little extent necessary to consider in every system of instruction, though the proof is the main thing.† His practice accords with this opinion, for his own style is not only careless and harsh, but often vexatiously obscure. And yet there were already in his language many noble specimens of style, in poetry, history, oratory, which have never been surpassed; so true is it in Rhetoric that just theory *follows* excellent practice.‡ It is only a few men whose matter is so surpassingly valuable as to be highly prized, like Aristotle's, notwithstanding great faults of style. The speakers and writers who have been widely and permanently influential, have usually accomplished it by good thoughts, well expressed. Often, indeed, excellence of style has given works a wide and lasting popularity which had little other merit. Goldsmith's Histories still hold their place in many schools, because so charmingly written, though they are not only behind the age, but very poorly represented the historical attainments of their own age. The wide-spread, though short-lived popularity gained by Renan's fanciful Life of Jesus, was due not merely to the sensational character of its contents, but very largely also to the extreme beauty of the style, particularly in the original French. When a student at a Jesuit College, Renan paid great attention to the cultivation of his style, and he has devoted himself mainly to the study of language and literature. In like manner science has in many cases gained a just appreciation only when recommended by a pleasing style. This was what Buffon did for Natural History. The popularity of Geology was immensely increased among the English-speaking peoples by Hugh Miller, through his marvellous powers of description and the general freshness and animation of his style. And so now with Agassiz. Such facts go to show that style is not a thing of mere ornament. Style is the glitter and polish of the warrior's sword, but is also its keen edge. It can render mediocrity acceptable and even attractive, can make power more powerful still. It can make error seductive, and truth may lie unnoticed for want of its aid. Shall religious teachers neglect so powerful a means of usefulness? True, Paul says, "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of man's wisdom."* He refused to deal in the would-be philosophy and the sensational and meretricious rhetoric which were so popular in that rapidly growing commercial city: but his style is a model of passionate energy, and rises, upon occasion, into an inartificial and exquisite beauty.†

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* See also Day, p. 213.

† Arist. Rhet. III, 1.

‡ Cicero says (Orator, 16) that "when one has found out what to say and in what order, there still remains *by far the greatest thing* viz. *how* to say it;" but in this he includes style and delivery.

Yet style is in this country much neglected. The French surpass all other modern nations, in respect of perspicuity, elegance, and animation, if not energy. The cultivated English come next to them in finish of style, and surpass them in power. The English University training, with all its defects, has in this respect produced noble results, as may be seen not only in the great Parliamentary orators and the admirable newspaper writing which England boasts, but also in preachers. The famous Oxford Tracts would not have been so influential but for their admirable style. The sermons of J. H. Newman, Robertson, Liddon, and Bishop Wilberforce are in this respect greatly to be admired. And the England of this century has credit for Robert Hall. The style of German prose, with a few grand exceptions,* has generally been very bad, particularly among religious writers. They have apparently recognized no obligation to compel the hearer or reader to understand them, or even to help him in doing so, but have aimed merely to express the thought in a form intelligible to themselves, without considering how it would be with others.† That is to say, they have sought subjective excellence of style, and not objective. But there seems to be at present a rapidly increasing number of German speakers and writers whose style is marked by perspicuity and grace, without sacrificing Teutonic profundity and strength. In America we have some writers and speakers, both secular and religious, who can be held up as models. But in general we fall seriously below the English. An extreme negligence and looseness of style very generally prevails. And the great American fault, in speaking and writing, is an excessive vehemence, a constant effort to be striking. Our style, as well as our delivery, too often lacks the calmness of conscious strength, the repose of simple sincerity, the quiet earnestness which only now and then becomes impassioned. "He will be an eloquent man who shall be able to speak of small matters in lowly phrase, of ordinary topics temperately, of great subjects with passion and power."‡

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* 1 Cor. 2 : 4.

† Witness in this same Epistle, chap 13 and chap. 15.

One cause of this neglect of style among us, and to some extent in England also, is the failure to understand its inseparable connection with the thought conveyed. De

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* Goethe's prose style is scarcely surpassed in any language.

† Comp. Quintilian, VIII, 2, 19.

‡ Cicero, Orator. 29.

Quincey says, "Here our quarrel is coextensive with that general principle in England, which tends in all things to set the matter above the manner, the substance above the external show; a principle noble in itself, but inevitably wrong wherever the manner blends inseparably with the substance."* The best style attracts least attention to itself, and none but the critical observer is apt to appreciate its excellence, most men giving credit solely to the matter, and having no idea how much the manner has contributed to attract and impress them. The thought is certainly the main thing; but the style also is important. "The experience of all times, and the testimony of all teachers, present to us as inseparable, these two propositions: 1. That we must not flatter ourselves that we shall have a good style, without an interesting fund of ideas. 2. That even with an interesting and substantial supply of ideas, we must not flatter ourselves that style will come of itself." †

It follows from all this that every writer and speaker should pay great attention to the improvement of his style. High excellence in style is necessarily rare; for a discourse, a paragraph, even a sentence, is really a work of art, fashioned by constructive imagination — and artist gifts of every kind are rare. But any man who will try, long enough and hard enough, can learn to say what he means, to say forcibly what he deeply feels, and to clothe his thoughts in a garb at least of homely neatness. Some of the best writers and speakers have had peculiar difficulty in acquiring a good style, e. g. John Foster; and their success affords encouragement to us all.

§ 2. MEANS OF IMPROVING STYLE.

Oratorical style is but one out of many species of style, and one variety of the oratorical style is that of the pulpit.

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* On Style, p. 66.

† Vinet, p. 353.

Yet a man's characteristic style will be *essentially* the same, in all kinds of writing and speaking; and mental cultivation should never be confined to the sphere of one's chief mental activity. We are therefore to consider the means of improvement, not merely as regards that which is peculiar to oratory, but as regards style in general.

1. The study of language, particularly of our own language, is in this respect exceedingly profitable. The *science* of language, which in the last forty years has accomplished so much, and which is now making such rapid progress, cannot be considered inferior, in point of interest and instructiveness, to any other of the sciences. But the study of the science as such, has only an indirect bearing on style; it is the practical acquisition of languages that is here the great source of benefit. This, when pursued with system, and on sound principles, compels close attention to the nature of language in general, to the history, changes and capacities of words, and the relation of syntactical construction to the different forms and processes of thought. It also attracts to the peculiarities of our own language a keener and more intelligent notice, than most persons would otherwise bestow. These benefits are more or less derived from the study of any language whatsoever. There is peculiar advantage in choosing French or German, because they correspond to the two great elements of which our own language is chiefly composed. But the time-honored study of Latin and Greek is more advantageous still. In their inflections, their syntax, their prose rhythm, these languages exhibit the full and instructive development of excellencies which English, French, German possess only in part. We have recourse to them as geologists explain outlying rocks or scattered fossils, by comparing them with beds in which similar specimens lie side by side with others to which they are related. This careful study of other languages is not only useful as a part of the

speaker's early training, but ought, so far as possible, to be kept up through life. It has been thus kept up by a very large proportion of those who have attained great excellence of style.

But whether acquainted or not with other languages, a man must earnestly study his own. It is very encouraging to observe the now rapidly increasing attention to the English Language in our best high-schools, Colleges and Universities. Apart from its incomparable practical importance to us, the English is in itself a worthy study, a most noble tongue. Foreigners naturally complain much of those irregularities in spelling and pronunciation, which have been almost necessarily produced by the union of two diverse languages into one. Critics at home can easily point out its weakness, and compare it unfavorably, in this or that respect, with some other idiom. But set against all this the words of a great German scholar, the foremost among all students of the Gothic family of languages "The English language, which by no mere accident has produced and upborne the greatest and most predominant poet of modern times, may with all right be called a world-language; and like the English people, appears destined hereafter to prevail with a sway more extensive even than its present over all portions of the globe. For in wealth, good sense, and closeness of structure, no other of the languages at this day spoken deserves to be compared with it — not even our German, which is torn, even as we are torn, and must first rid itself of many defects, before it can enter boldly into the lists, as a competitor with the English."* It is not like Italian for music, nor like French for conversation, nor like German as to facility in forming new compounds, but taken all in all, for history, poetry, philosophy, oratory, for society and for business, it is at present unequalled. A popular writer has recently called it "the grammarless tongue"; but English has a grammar, a very regular syntax, and one that is often and flagrantly violated, even by able and cultivated men. De Quincey declares: "It makes us blush to add, that even grammar is so little of a perfect attainment amongst us, that with two or three exceptions, (one being Shakspeare, whom some affect to consider as belonging to a semi-barbarous age,) we have never seen the writer, through a circuit of prodigious reading, who has not sometimes violated the accidence or the syntax of English Grammar." *

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* Jacob Grimm, quoted by Trench and Angus.

The most scientific works on English Grammar have to be sought in German — a reproach to the English-speaking people which ought to cease.† Persons who have been carefully drilled in Greek and Latin, especially by written translations from English into those languages and from them into English, usually feel that they have no use for the common treatises on English Grammar. Yet we have many books which even scholars may examine with profit, and which students in general would find very useful.‡ It

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* De Quincey on Style, p. 105.

† A Professor in one of our leading American Universities, though a man of vast acquirements, had never studied German. In history, in general literature, even in metaphysical philosophy, he was content with what could be found in Greek and Latin, in French and English. But at length determining to make a thorough study of *English Grammar*, he was compelled to learn German.

‡ For example, Angus' Hand-Book of the English Tongue is excellent. Add to it Trench on the Study of Words, and his "English, Past and Present." And by all means read Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, Book II, chap. 1–4, and Book III, chap. 4–5, in which he treats of grammar. Every student ought to keep constantly within reach, and very freely to consult, the latest edition of Webster's Dictionary, unabridged, the definitions in which are exceedingly instructive, while the orthography is less objectionable than in former editions. One who wishes to get some knowledge of the modern science of language in its bearings on English, should read Whitney's "Language, and the Study of Language," and

is true that books on grammar are not everything in acquiring command of the language, nor the main thing. There are men among us who have studied no such books, nor any other language, and yet who speak and write English with correctness and even with force and beauty. The great works of Greek poetry and history were written before any treatises on grammar existed. These facts remind us that we must find elsewhere the *principal* means of improvement in style, but they by no means prove that grammars are useless. We have to learn the usage of the language, and grammars undertake to present this usage in a systematic and convenient form. They show us our faults, and warn us where there is danger; they set us to observing language, and reflecting upon it. The rules of grammar have most effectually done their work when conformity to them has become habitual, and we need the rules no longer — yea, when we have so fully entered into the principles involved, that upon occasion we may even violate a rule.* Correct habits may be formed, and right principles comprehended, without books of grammar, but more rapidly and surely with them, provided we use them only as helps, and aim to go deeper than they can carry us. As to this whole matter of studying English Grammar, two practical errors widely prevail, and greatly need to be corrected. Men who have been to College are apt to think they have no need to study their own language at all, and especially no need of consulting books on the subject — the latter part of this opin-

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Max Müller's two volumes on the Science of Language, and then take Marsh's Lectures on the English Language. Alford's "The Queen's English," and the other books and numerous Magazine articles to which it has given rise, are usually entertaining and suggestive, but tend to hyper-criticism, often magnifying trifles and dogmatizing about doubtful questions, to the neglect of broad views and fixed principles.

* Comp. as to the rules of Rhetoric, above, Introduction, § 4.

ion being a mistake, and the former a very great mistake. On the other hand, men who have had fewer educational advantages are in danger of supposing that without systematic instruction they can do nothing to improve their style, or else that after studying a book or two on English Grammar, they have nothing more to do.*

It may be remarked in general that a preacher ought to employ pure English, according to current use; not quickly catching up the novelties of the street or the daily paper, and not introducing those archaisms with which he is familiar from commerce with old books, but which his hearers would not readily understand. He should speak the English of *general* use, not employing local peculiarities of phrase except for special reason; but he should retain genuine English idiom, even where superficial critics attempt to displace it. The preacher must never invent words. Madame de Staël says, "There is in general no surer symptom of barrenness of ideas, than the invention of words,"— a remark which may at least be set over against the notion that such invention is a symptom of originality. And he should not, save in very peculiar cases, employ words or phrases from foreign languages. It was once very common, and thought to be very appropriate, for a minister to quote much Latin and Greek in his sermons. Even Wesley's sermons abound in such quotations, though he preached mainly to the common people. It is a sign of improved taste that this is no longer the practice. A speaker must now use his knowledge of other languages only as giving him increased power over his own language. Even where one refers to the original Scriptures, it is very rarely proper to mention the Greek or Hebrew word.

2. The study of *literature* perhaps contributes still more to the improvement of style, than the direct study of language. From reading we gain much in the knowledge of

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* On the importance of studying Anglo-Saxon, see below, chap. 2

language, especially as to richness of vocabulary, fulness of expression.* But more. It is chiefly by reading that we form our literary *taste* — a matter of unspeakable importance. Cicero makes one of his characters say, referring to Greek literature: "As, when I walk in the sun, even though I walk for another reason, my complexion is yet colored; so, when I have read these books, I feel that my style of speaking is as it were colored by their influence." † And what Shakspeare mournfully says, is true in this better sense also,

> "My nature is subdued
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

To bathe our minds in choice literature till they become imbued with correct principles of style, to nourish them with good learning till our taste grows healthy, so as to discern quickly and surely between good and bad, is a process surpassingly profitable in its results, and in itself delightful.

And not only do we need to cultivate good literature for its positive benefits, but also to counteract certain evil influences of great power. Few among us have learned from childhood to speak graceful and forcible English, few indeed to speak it with bare correctness. Mother-tongue is often to a great extent nurse's tongue; and in this country that usually means the broken and rude English of the negroes, or the brogue of the most ignorant Irish. From our childish associates we seldom gained much in the way of grammatical correctness or good taste. And as men grow up and go on in life, so large a part of what they read in newspapers, and of what they hear in conversation and even in public speaking, is in a vicious style, that they inevitably feel the effect. Besides the more obvious errors, as to pronunciation and syntax, which are too often committed by cultivated speakers, there results from these influences a more subtle and more serious injury to taste, which only a continued application to the best literature can remedy and prevent. De Quincey points out that the immense multiplication of newspapers has injured our style of conversation. Everybody reads them constantly, and their writers too often use the most bookish and inflated language in treating of common things. One who wishes to form a good style would do well to select his newspapers, secular and religious, with reference to this, as well as to other considerations. The style of preaching will always naturally, and to a great extent properly, share the peculiarities which mark the literature of the day. When this exhibits bad taste, as is so often true now of newspaper writing and public speaking, we must correct the evil by intimacy with the truly great authors, of our own and of former times.

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* Kossuth derived his wonderful knowledge of English from the study of Shakspeare, while in prison.

† De Orat. II, 15, 16.

It is delightful to think how many good authors there are, in English and in other languages. Our religious literature, both sermons and other works, presents noble specimens of style, in which one may at the same time nourish the intellect, warm the heart, and refine the taste, and among which he may select such as will exert the kind of influence he particularly needs. The great French preachers, from Bossuet to Monod, with such Americans as J. M. Mason and R. Fuller, form admirable examples of passion combined with elegance. Baxter is remarkable for directness and pungency, Bunyan for homely and charming simplicity. If one's style is dry and barren, he may read Chrysostom, Jeremy Taylor, Chalmers, or Melville. For a grand model of style, which, like some young Grecian athlete, stands glorious in disciplined strength and manly beauty, we must go to Robert Hall, his writings as well as his sermons. And if the influence of Hall should tend to produce monotonous elevation, never coming down to common phrases, nor coming close with personal applications, the exact remedy is to be found in familiarity with Spurgeon. But any such indication of specimens must be unjust, if not misleading, as regards the many that are omitted. The important matter is, that one should not read at hap-hazard; that taking account of his mental constitution, his previous training and present stage of development, the particular tendencies as to thinking and style of which he is now conscious, he should select, according to the best accessible information, such works as will best meet his actual wants.

Preachers ought to derive very great benefit in point of style, from their constant reading and minute study of the English Bible. The Scriptures embrace almost every species of style, and each with many varieties. And the current English translation, though some of its phrases have become nearly obsolete, presents the English language in its most admirable form. It dates from the golden age of English literature, and deserves, in an eminent degree, the eulogy which Spenser passed upon Chaucer, as a "well of English undefyled."

Besides the common ground of general literature, which no one, of whatever special calling, can afford to neglect, preachers may learn much from the great secular orators, even as lawyers and statesmen often diligently study the great preachers. And this is true, not merely for the beginner, but even more for the practised speaker. To see the same principles carried out in material and for purposes quite different from his own, will illustrate those principles afresh, and will prevent his becoming formal in arrangement and monotonous in style. In oratory and in general literature, the Greek language and our own English are rich beyond rivalry. To these let the preacher mainly address himself, in youth and in age, and literature will shed on his intellectual and æsthetical culture its "selectest influence." But let not the young student submit himself to the authority of any writer as a perfect standard, nor be repelled from some of the greatest by their manifest blemishes. "There is no writer who has not some faults, and faults of taste are perhaps those the most common to the highest and the lowest order of writers. The taste of Shakspeare and Milton is not always unimpeachable. But it is to the greatest writers that Adam Smith's exclamation applies — 'How many great qualities must that writer possess who can thus render his very faults agreeable!' If we desire to find a writer without fault, we must not look for him among the greatest writers."* Augustine had been in his youth a teacher of rhetoric. He knew the folly of that artificial instruction in style and delivery which there have always been teachers to recommend, and he knew that even a just rhetorical system is but a help to something higher. He says: "Moreover, I enjoin it upon him who would combine eloquence with wisdom, by which he will certainly become more effective, to read and listen to the eloquent, and imitate them in exercises, rather than apply to the teachers of the rhetorical art; provided those whom he hears and reads were, or are now, justly celebrated, not merely for their eloquence, but also for their wisdom."†

It should be added that conversation, especially that of intelligent women, may also furnish admirable and influential examples of clear, sprightly, varied, and every way attractive style. So too with Letters. "Would you desire at this day to read our noble language in its native beauty, picturesque from idiomatic propriety, racy in its phraseology, delicate yet sinewy in its composition — steal the mail-bags, and break open all the letters in female hand writing." * Cicero's Epistles are for most men far better examples of style than Cicero's Orations. And if to an acquaintance with Bacon, Milton's prose, Barrow and Burke, one should add a familiarity with some of the finest Letters, he would see the English language in all its most prodigal strength and splendor, and in all its most flexible grace and delicate beauty.†

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* Bulwer, On Style, Caxtoniana, I, 131.

† De Doct. Christ. IV

3. But the chief means of improvement in style is careful practice, in writing and speaking. Not mere practice without care, for this will develop and confirm what is faulty as well as what is good.

In written composition, it is very unwise, although very common, to neglect details. If a man *spells* badly, he should set himself vigorously to correct the fault, which usually requires nothing but a little system and perseverance.‡ To take some pains in this direction is worth while, not only for the sake of removing a literary blemish, but because accuracy in detail is apt to react profitably upon our mental habits, and also to increase our love for the work of composition. Some one has said that there never was a great sculptor who did not love to chip the marble. And if spelling be worth attention, so is *punctuation*, though this is still more commonly neglected. Punctuation indicates the relation of the parts of a sentence to each other. The only real difficulty in punctuating properly is the difficulty in determining the true relation of clauses, and he who does not mark the points is apt to neglect, more than he is aware, the structure of his sentences. Aristotle urges that we should write in a style easy to point,* and it is certainly very desirable to make the sense unmistakable, apart from punctuation. But the inferior flexibility of construction, and the comparative lack of particles, makes this much more difficult in English than in Greek and many other languages; so that with us punctuation is particularly important. It will be evident, too, that every man's punctuation must be to some extent his own, as it indicates his mode of constructing sentences. Of this, Chalmers is a good example, in his infrequent use of the comma. The dash, which has of late become so common, is convenient to indicate a break in the sentence, whether an interruption, so as to insert something akin to a parenthesis, or an abrupt transition to something related to what precedes, but not joined to it by strict grammatical connection. It is thus an affectation to abjure the dash altogether, as some propose to do, but it should be used only for a distinct and positive reason. Many good writers now use it to save the trouble of deciding what more definite pointing is appropriate, — certainly a very slothful fashion; and some of the best writers, as Brougham and Bulwer, introduce the dash so often as to break many of their sentences into disjointed fragments. In practical attention to punctuation, we must endeavor to master the principles involved, the fundamental significance which usage has assigned to the several points, and then use them according to our own meaning, and not according to the stiff and unbending rules which are so often laid down. And it should be noticed that although forbidden by many of the books, punctuation may be sometimes employed, apart from grammatical relations, to indicate the *rhythmical* movement of the successive parts of a sentence.*

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* De Quincey on Style, p. 77.

† Holcombe's Literature in Letters (New York, Appleton) is a delightful volume, containing a choice collection of English and American Letters, classified and with all necessary annotation.

‡ Let him have whatever he writes examined by some accurate speller, and make lists of the words corrected, putting them down as they ought to be, and frequently running over the growing list, with the resolve, at every step, that this error, and this, shall occur no more; further, let him habitually consult a dictionary when doubtful as to the spelling of a word; and moreover, he must begin to notice spelling in the books and periodicals he reads, and to take interest in disputed questions. We often find it harder to correct confirmed habits about trifles than about more important matters, because the former do not awaken an interested and watchful attention. The plan proposed will meet this difficulty

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* Rhet. III, 5, 6.

And so as to all the details of grammar. Campbell tells of a preacher who was consulted by a friend that had a mind to publish, "whether he thought it befitting a writer on religion to attend to such little matters as grammatical correctness," and who answered, "By all means. It is much better to write so as to make a critic turn Christian, than so as to make a Christian turn critic." †

There can be no question that grammatical accuracy is an object worthy of earnest pursuit. The young preacher who finds himself particularly deficient in this respect, ought, besides such study of treatises on grammar as we have already urged, to go through some good work on Composition, laboriously writing the exercises. If nothing else were gained, it is much to be relieved from all fear of committing blunders that would be ridiculed.

But while attentive to the details of composition, one must be chiefly occupied with the thought; and in order to this, composition as a mere exercise must more and more give place to writing with a real interest, with some practical aim. In all such writing, one should become possessed with the subject, and then write as rapidly as is consistent with perspicuous and forcible expression, leaving minute corrections to be made afterward. But he must be sure to make the corrections. Thought once cast into a mould is apt to harden very soon, and any considerable alteration is then a difficult and laborious task. Sometimes a whole paragraph must be thrown back into the furnace of the mind, and fused anew, in order to remove a single flaw in one sentence. Think of John Foster, toiling over a sentence for two hours, determined to have it right.

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* A good practical discussion of punctuation may be found in Angus' Hand-Book of the English Tongue, and also, with copious exercises, in Quackenbos' Composition and Rhetoric. Let no man think it beneath his dignity to use good school-books for such a purpose.

† On Pulpit Eloq., Lect. III.

A most valuable means of improvement in command of language and style in general, is written translation into English from other languages. This tests and develops, in a peculiar manner, our knowledge of English. When attempting to express our own thoughts, we have the idea at first only in a dim, shifting, nebulous form ; and in struggling to find the exact expression, we may unconsciously change the idea into something else for which fit expression presents itself. But in translating, — not merely putting word for word, like a school-boy, but getting the exact idea conveyed by a sentence, and then seeking the exact expression for that idea in English, — no such substitution or shifting can take place. The thought stands fixed in the other language, with the peculiar shape and color which that language gives it, and we must find English to express it, or must know that our effort to do so has failed. Thus careful translation is in one respect a better exercise than original composition. It is obvious that a similar benefit will be derived, though in a less degree, from oral translation. It is well known that William Pitt was carefully trained by his father to off-hand translation from Greek and other languages, and that he believed himself to have derived immense advantage from it.

In addition to writing, one must studiously practise *speaking*, in order to form his speaking style. A man skilled in both, may closely imitate in writing the style of speaking, but the two are really distinct, and in some respects quite different. Let one speak much that has been carefully prepared, though not written; and speak sometimes, as in social meetings, upon the strong impulse of the moment. Let him always have a practical purpose, and throw himself into an effort, not to make a discourse, but to accomplish his object. Let him closely observe his hearers, and learn to perceive when they understand and are impressed. He will thus become able to judge when to be diffuse, and when rapid, and will acquire the directness of address, the power of constant movement towards a fixed point, the passionate energy and unstudied grace, the flexibility and variety which characterize the speaking style.* And he who aims at skill in extemporaneous speaking, must give special attention to his style in conversation, so that the difference between his more elevated and his more familiar style may be a difference in degree and not in kind.

It may be added that every writer or speaker should cultivate *variety* of style. A model of excellence in this respect may be seen in the correspondence and the sermons of J. Addison Alexander.

After all that has been said or that can be said as to style, no one should imagine that he need only seek to acquire power of expression, and may give little attention to *thought*. Some young men fall into this error, and it is simply fatal. "Let there be care about words," says Quintilian, "but solicitude about things."

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* Comp. on the style of extemporaneous speaking, Part IV, chap 1, § 3, 2.

CHAPTER II.

PERSPICUITY OF STYLE.*

THE most important property of style is perspicuity. Style is excellent when, like the atmosphere, it shows the thought, but itself is not seen. Yet this comparison, and the term perspicuity which was derived from it, are both inadequate, for good style is like stereoscopic glasses, which, transparent themselves, give form and body and distinct outline to that which they exhibit.†

A certain grand-looking obscurity is often pleasing to some hearers and readers, who suppose that it shows vast learning, or great originality,‡ or immense profundity. To treat subjects in this fashion is no new thing. Quintilian says it was not new in his day, for that he found mention in Livy of a teacher who used to direct his pupils to *darken* the idea. He adds a witticism of some one whose hearers complained that they did not understand, and who replied, "So much the better; I did not even understand it myself," ‖ and elsewhere speaks of men who think themselves talented because it requires talent to understand them. M. Huc says that in the Lama Converts, where the Buddhist professors lecture to their pupils, the more obscure and unintelligible their sayings, the more sublime they are reckoned. Alas! that preachers of the gospel are not always proof against this pitiful temptation.

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* The best classification of the leading properties of style is that adopted from Campbell by Whately and others, viz. perspicuity, energy, and elegance. Shedd substitutes plainness, force, and beauty, and Day uses clearness, energy, and beauty; but in both cases more is lost by the change than is gained. Blair (following Quintilian) treats only of perspicuity and ornament, and his own style is clear and neat, but nerveless.

On perspicuity, consult especially Campbell, and Herbert Spencer's Essay on Style.

† Comp. Shedd, p. 59.

‡ Comp. on originality, Part I, chap. 4, § 3.

‖ Quint. VIII, 2, 18

A preacher is more solemnly bound than any other person, to make his language perspicuous. This is very important in wording a law, in writing a title-deed, or a physician's prescription, but still more important in proclaiming the Word of God, words of eternal life.

> "The thoughts which the religious teacher presents to the common mind should go straight to the understanding. Everything that covers up and envelops the truth should be stripped off from it, so that the bare reality may be seen. There is prodigious power in this plainness of presentation. It is the power of actual contact A plain writer, or speaker, makes the truth and the mind impinge upon each other. When the style is plain, the mind of the hearer experiences the sensation of being touched; and this sensation is always impressive, for a man starts when he is touched. . . . . The preacher should toil after this property of style, as he would toil after virtue itself. He should constantly strive, first of all, to exhibit his thoughts plainly. Whether he shall add force to plainness, and beauty to force, are matters to be considered afterwards. . . . . The public is, at the present time, too eager after striking externals, for its own good. It demands brilliancy before plainness, without sufficient regard for that basis of strong sense which must ever support this quality, in order that it may have true value. The preacher is consequently tempted to yield to this false taste of the ill-educated, and to become like the public. . . . . In the midst of all this clamor for fine writing and florid style, he should be a resolute man, and dare to be a plain writer. . . . . The preacher whose head is right, and whose conscience is right, will soon come to possess a love for this plainness." *

It is also true that a preacher has greater difficulty than any other class of speakers in making his style perspicuous to *all* his hearers, for no others speak to so heterogeneous an audience, including persons of both sexes, of every age from early childhood, and of every grade of intellect and culture. But this difficulty, when most deeply felt, should but stimulate to diligent and pains-taking effort. For what is the use of preaching, unless we may hope to do good? And what good can be done, save in proportion as we are understood? Pretentious obscurity may excite a poor admiration, unmeaning prettiness may give a certain pleasure, mere vociferation, — like Bottom's part, "nothing but roaring," — may affect some people's nerves, but only truth, and truth that is understood, can bring real benefit. Moreover, something worse may happen than the failure to do good; we may do harm. Some hearers are repelled and disgusted by obscurity. Others are misled. It is a mournful thing to think of, but one of not infrequent occurrence, that men should so misunderstand us, as to take what we meant for medicine and convert it into poison As we love men's souls we must strive to prevent so dreadful a result. One cannot expect, as Quintilian already remarks, "that the hearer will be so intent upon understanding as to cast upon the darkness of the speech a light from his own intelligence. What we say must be made so clear that it will pour into his mind as the sun pours into the eyes, even when they are not directed toward it. We must take care, not that it shall be possible for him to understand, but that it shall be utterly impossible for him not to understand."* The German philosopher Fichte wrote a treatise with this title; "An account clear as the sun, of the real nature of my philosophy; an attempt to compel the reader to understand."† None but a very self-confident man would put forth such a title; but it indicates what every teacher of men ought to aim at, not arrogantly, but resolutely, — to compel the reader or hearer to understand.

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* Shedd, Hom. p. 63–9.

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* Quint VIII, 2, 23.

† Quoted by Shedd, p. 72.

Two general remarks as to perspicuity may be here made. The style may be not lacking in perspicuity, and yet the discourse may seem hard to comprehend, because the *subject* is difficult, or what is taught about it is unacceptable. It is very common to speak of the Epistle to the Romans as obscure; how far is this opinion due to a desire to understand *more* upon some subjects than it teaches, or a reluctance to receive as true what it does teach? The more plainly a discourse presents its truths, the more obscure it will seem when we are striving to make it mean something else. The other remark is, that perspicuity of style is closely allied to perspicuity of *thought.* It is true, as Whately says,* that men sometimes speak obscurely on a subject for the simple reason that they are familiar with it, and forget that others are not so; — a practical mistake which preachers are in no small danger of making. If any one should assert that clear ideas of a subject will always lead to clear statements, this common experience would set aside the assertion. The statement of clear ideas will be subjectively clear, but is by no means sure to be objectively clear; it will be plain to him who makes it, but may be very obscure to other people. But all this has nothing to do with that other proposition, that there can be no clearness of expression *without* clear thinking. The effort to gain a clear conception and to work out a perspicuous expression of it, will usually go on together; and the habit of perspicuous expression reacts powerfully on habits of thought.†

Perspicuity of style depends mainly on three things, viz. the choice of *terms,* the *construction* of sentences and paragraphs, and the proper management of *brevity and diffuseness.*

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* Rhetoric, p. 307.

† As to the effect of *arrangement* on perspicuity, see Part II, chap 1, (2).

1. So far as perspicuity depends on the *terms* employed, it requires the combination of two elements.

(1.) We must use, as far as possible, words and phrases that will be *intelligible* to our audience. Where the audience comprises many who are comparatively illiterate, — and that is generally the case, — we must strive to make the terms intelligible to them. "Speak," said a sensible farmer to his brother who was a preacher, "speak so that the women and children can understand you, and the men will be sure to." * Dean Swift, in his famous Letter to a Young Clergyman, puts the matter as follows: "I have been curious enough to take a list of several hundred words in a sermon of a new beginner, which not one of his hearers among a hundred could possibly understand; neither can I easily call to mind any clergyman of my own acquaintance, who is wholly exempt from this error, although many of them agree with me in the dislike of the thing. But I am apt to put myself in the place of the vulgar, and think many words difficult or obscure, which the preacher will not allow to be so, because these words are obvious to scholars."

Whether the preacher be what is called a linguist or not, he ought to know at least two languages, the language of books and the language of common life. When one learns a thing in Latin or German, and undertakes to state it to his people, he must of course translate. And so, what we study in learned works, using, as is there convenient and necessary, the technical language of science, we must in preaching translate into popular language, the language of common life. Many a young graduate, from College or Theological Seminary, errs not merely in treating subjects little suited to the popular mind, but in using many terms which have grown familiar to him, but which the people in general cannot at all understand. Most persons afterwards learn to correct this, at least in some measure; but occasionally we see a man of mature years and of great ability, who seems wholly unacquainted with popular modes of thought and forms of expression, and wholly unaware that such is the case. The few who understand and sympathize with him speak with delight of his sermons, but for the many they might as well be delivered in German.* Even those technical terms in theology with which the people are very familiar, do not always represent to them any distinct conception. Yet such terms as regeneration, depravity, etc., etc., it is necessary to use in preaching, or much time will be lost in tedious circumlocutions. Besides taking frequent occasion distinctly to explain these terms, we may often prefix or add to them some words of a more popular character, or may introduce them in such connections as will throw light on them.† That even the commonest words of Scripture may be employed in an utterly unscriptural sense, is shown by the frequent use of them on the part of modern Pantheistic infidels.

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* In some places the women are better educated than the men and they are usually quicker and more attentive; but that does not affect the principle of the farmer's saying.

It is often remarked that Anglo-Saxon words are generally more perspicuous to the people at large, than words of Latin origin. The latter are frequently more *precise*, being restricted in usage to a certain specific sense, while the Anglo-Saxon word is the general term. Thus the phrase, perspicuity of style, is a more precise expression than plainness or clearness of style, and is therefore preferable in a treatise, or in conversation with a cultivated person. But in speaking to a general audience it would be better to use the term plainness, notwithstanding its ambiguity, because the people so much more readily and vividly see its meaning. And if there should be danger of their confusing the two senses, of plainness as opposed to obscurity, and plainness as opposed to ornament, we may guard against this by adding some other simple phrase which will show what is meant. In general, the Anglo-Saxon element of our language deserves great attention, for its terms are not only perspicuous to all, but are apt to be singularly suggestive, through life-long association of ideas; besides the bulk of meaning contained, they carry with them an atmosphere of suggestion, often surpassingly attractive and stimulating. Those who have studied Latin and French ought to study Anglo-Saxon also; and whether a student of language or not, every preacher should practically master the homely, "household words" of our own English. Let it not be taken for granted that we know these already; for the discriminating use of them is by no means universal, even among educated men.*

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* See a striking passage in Vinet, p. 373–4.

† As to Foster's objection to the use of such terms, compare below on Elegance, chap. 4.

(2.) We must use words and phrases that *exactly express* our thought. Terms may be intelligible to the audience, and yet not certainly represent to them our meaning. They may be ambiguous, so that while the hearer understands both senses, he does not readily see which is here intended. Even the sacred writers, employing an easy, colloquial style, have sometimes left us ambiguous expressions. For example, the love of God, in Greek as in English, may denote our love to God, or his love to us. Which it means in any case must be determined from the connection, or perhaps from the usage of the writer. John uses it in both senses, Paul almost invariably in the latter. A style absolutely free from such ambiguities would not be natural, and yet they ought of course to be avoided as far as possible. Or, terms may be used in different senses in the same connection, and thus, although not in themselves ambiguous, may leave the meaning doubtful. Or they may be general terms, and fail to indicate what specific idea was meant. Or they may be indefinite, and leave it uncertain what extent of meaning was designed. In general, the terms ought to be *precise*, as it were *cut down* to fit the meaning, so that the expression and the idea exactly correspond, neither of them containing anything which the other does not contain.* Such terms may almost always be found, and we should habitually constrain ourselves to seek for them. Besides the advantage of perspicuity to others, this habit will greatly benefit our own minds, for our thoughts attain a definite form and distinct outlines only in proportion as we find the precise terms to express them. It will also give freshness. No two men think exactly alike, even as all countenances are different; and he who thinks at all upon a subject, and then *says just what he thinks*, cannot fail of being to some extent original.

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* On the general subject of studying English, see above, chap. 1, § 2. Of course it would be great folly to prefer an Anglo-Saxon word merely because it is such, when a word of Latin or other origin would be equally intelligible, or much more appropriate. But the effort to use the most perspicuous and expressive terms will be promoted by habitual attention to the Anglo-Saxon part of our language.

One important means of securing precision, is accurate discrimination between so-called *synonymes*. Even the English language, which in so many cases retains both an Anglo-Saxon and a Latin word of much the same original meaning, has, strictly speaking, no synonymes. Our usage has assigned to the words different departments of the field once common to both, or at least a different extent of application. The more cultivated a language becomes, as De

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* It should be remarked that Vinet's discussion of precision, and of what he calls propriety, is apt to confuse the student, because those terms do not mean precisely the same thing in French as in English. This difficulty also exists with reference to some other portions of his valuable work.

Quincey has remarked, the more it distinguishes between apparent synonymes. To take a familiar example, the Greek word sympathy, the Latin compassion, and the compound of Anglo-Saxon, fellow-feeling, are in origin substantially the same; but how distinct they now are as English words. Yet there are very many cases in which different words will coincide, to a greater or less extent, so that the careless observer would regard them as in all respects equivalent, and between these it is highly important to discriminate. Our own language, for the reason just indicated, greatly abounds in these synonymes, and the preacher cannot be too earnestly urged to give them his constant and pains-taking attention.*

Skill in the choice of terms comes to no man as a matter of course. All who succeed in this respect, however gifted or however unlettered, have attained it by observation, reflection, practice. He who thinks words unimportant, will never be perspicuous in expression, nor clear in thinking.†

2. Perspicuity also depends on the construction of sentences and paragraphs. This important subject will not

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* Whately's Synonymes is our best book, so far as it goes. The latest editions of Webster's and Worcester's Dictionaries (unabridged), treat all the more important Synonymes, and many of them in a very instructive manner. Roget's Thesaurus of English Words is also useful, for this and kindred purposes. Crabb's Synonymes, which became famous because we had nothing else, is deficient in clearness, and often inaccurate.

† A talented and highly educated young man who was made Professor of Natural Sciences in an American University, rarely met a particular friend of his without speaking of words. "What do you think is the difference between this word and this? It is so hard to find the precise word for describing physical forces and phenomena." A few years later a gentleman who had heard the Professor lecture said to the same friend, "He is thoroughly master of the subject, and he has an extraordinary readiness and felicity in the use of words. What a wonderful gift! He wants a word, and there it is." Fluency is a gift, but precision is the fruit of labor.

here be discussed at length, because it requires to be illustrated by numerous examples, and can be thoroughly mastered only by means of written exercises.

It is obvious that a short sentence will be more perspicuous than a long one. Yet a *succession* of very short sentences must not only be deficient in respect of harmony, and of the energy which belongs to climax, but is really unfavorable to perspicuity. Sentences aggregate the thoughts which are to be comprehended and retained; and if these bundles, so to speak, are of considerable dimensions, the whole mass of thought will be more readily grasped and more easily borne with us. In order to variety, there should be a combination of short and long sentences. Even one that is very long may be quite perspicuous, provided the sense be not suspended till the close, as is done in periodic sentences.* In general it is better that the qualifying clauses of a sentence should precede those qualified; in order that when we do reach a concrete conception, it may be the complete conception proposed, needing no subsequent addition or correction. But, "as carrying forward each qualifying clause costs some mental effort, it follows that when the number of them and the time they are carried becomes great, we reach a limit beyond which more is lost than is gained." † This limit is much sooner reached in what is to be heard than in what is to be read. And the difficulty is greater for uneducated minds than cultivated people can well imagine. "Aim at a certain simplicity in the structure of your sentences, avoiding long, intricate and complex periods. Remember always that the bulk of the people are unused to reading and study. They lose sight of the connection in very long sentences, and they are quite bewildered when, for the sake of rounding a period, and suspending the sense till the concluding clause, you transgress the customary arrangement of the words

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* See below, chap. 3.

† Herbert Spencer, on Style, p. 24

The nearer therefore your diction comes to the language of conversation, the more familiar will it be to them, and so the more easily apprehended. In this the style of Scripture is an excellent model." * It may be added that sentences should be so framed as to leave no obscurity or ambiguity in respect to the relation of different clauses. Special care in this respect is needed in our language, because our pronouns present very imperfect means of distinction as to gender, number and case. It is grievously common to find difficulty in perceiving, to which of two preceding nouns some *it* or *that*, some *they* or *those*, is designed to refer.†

However great may be the practical difficulty of learning to construct sentences well, every one can see that this is important. Inexperienced writers and speakers are seldom equally impressed with the importance of the *paragraph.* It is not uncommon to find a man of considerable ability writing an extended discourse or essay without any indication of paragraphs at all; though there will have been, in spite of his inattention, some natural connection of the thoughts, and a critic or compositor may succeed in breaking up the whole into rude blocks. Others do still worse, for they indicate paragraphs at hap-hazard, often separating matters which should be united. Now in some respects the proper construction of paragraphs is more important than that of sentences. If a sentence is badly arranged, the reader or hearer will at any rate have the matter of it before his mind, and can usually perceive, with more or less effort, what relation of ideas was meant to be expressed. But when paragraphs are neglected, it requires a very broad view of the whole connection of discourse to supply the defect. In reading, there may be opportunity, if it is thought worth while, to look back, and carefully scan the whole, so as to perceive the grouping of thoughts; and besides, in reading print, the compositor has helped us. But in hearing, we have no help, and no time to study out the connection. It is thus plain, that, especially in discourse which has to be *heard*, the proper management of paragraphs is indispensable to perspicuity.

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* Campbell on Pulpit Eloq., Lect. III.

† See this matter well discussed in Campbell's Phil. of Rhet p 253-65.

The prime requisite in a paragraph is unity. There must be some one thought, or group of related thoughts, occupying the whole. Digressions, when made at all, must constitute separate paragraphs. This one thought may commonly be presented in the opening sentence; or it may so present the first of a series or group of thoughts, as to indicate the character and purpose common to them all. Sometimes, however, the opening sentence will be manifestly preparatory, perhaps repeating what has preceded, in order to facilitate the transition. Another requisite is, that the successive sentences should so grow out of each other, or be so joined together by particles, as to make the paragraph a whole. As to the length of paragraphs, there is of course no rule, and the main thing to be sought is an easy and natural variety.*

In the formation of paragraphs, and also of sentences, careful attention should be given to the conjunctions, and other *connectives*. What grammarians call the *particles*, or little parts of speech, are not less important than the greater parts, for they establish a relation between these, converting crude matter into a structure, an operative organization — like the joints in a body. The felicitous choice of a preposition or conjunction, or the proper handling of a relative pronoun, will often contribute immensely to the perspicuity of a sentence or a paragraph.†

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* The subject of paragraphs is treated at length, and with some good examples, by Bain, p. 142–52. Most treatises neglect it.

† See, on the connectives, Campbell's Phil. of Rhet., Part III chap. 4 and 5. See also Bain, as above.

In unwritten composition, or what is called extemporaneous speaking, it is practically better, though amounting to the same thing, to fix the mind on *points*, rather than on paragraphs. Do not be thinking how you would distribute this on pages if you were writing, but arrange a succession of points to be treated. Then taking up each of these in order, remember the homely saying, and "stick to your point." One may thus gain the unity and consecutiveness which belong to a written paragraph. Yet there is probably no one particular in which a speaker so much needs the discipline of written composition, as in respect to this matter of *consecutiveness* in developing a single thought. A man who never writes anything may sometimes learn to frame sentences well, and to arrange discourses well. He may have distinct points, corresponding to paragraphs, and each constituting a unit. But to develop these points in an orderly manner, so that each sentence may grow out of the preceding, or have a well-indicated connection with it, so that the developed unit may become a structure, an harmonious organization, this is what few men learn to achieve without practice in writing paragraphs. Nor does the hurried writing so common among those who read sermons, at all mend the matter. What De Quincey says on a kindred subject is here emphatically true. "Every man who has had any experience in writing, knows how natural it is for hurry and fulness of matter to discharge itself by vast sentences, involving clause within clause *ad infinitum* — how difficult it is, and how much a work of time, to break up this huge fasciculus of cycle and epicycle into a graceful succession of sentences, long intermingled with short, each modifying the other, and arising musically by links of spontaneous connection. Now the plethoric form of period, this monster model of sentence, bloated with decomplex intercalations . . . . is the prevailing model in newspaper eloquence.

Crude undigested masses of suggestion, furnishing rather raw materials for composition and jottings for the memory, than any formal developments of the ideas, describe the quality of writing which *must* prevail in journalism: not from defect of talents . . . . but from the necessities of hurry and of instant compliance with an instant emergency, granting no possibility for revision, or opening for amended thought." * Nay, it requires careful writing, not hurried, even though sometimes rapid, and not put forth without critical revision, to give the kind of training which is here needed. Such careful writing, though not of what he is about to speak, an extemporaneous preacher ought frequently to practise.†

3. Perspicuity depends not only on the choice of terms, and the proper construction of sentences and paragraphs, but also on the general brevity or diffuseness of the style.

It is a mistake to suppose that the briefest statement of an idea is sure to be the clearest. If it be really made clear to the person addressed, then of course the briefer the better. But "extreme conciseness is ill-suited to hearers or readers whose intellectual powers and cultivation are but small. . . . . It is remarked by anatomists, that the nutritive quality is not the only requisite in food; — that a certain degree of *distention* of the stomach is required, to enable it to act with its full powers; — and that it is for this reason hay or straw must be given to horses, as well as corn, in order to supply the necessary bulk. Something analogous to this takes place with respect to the generality of minds; which are incapable of thoroughly digesting and assimilating what is presented to them, however clearly, in a very small compass. . . . . It is necessary that the attention should be detained for a certain time on the subject: and persons of unphilosophical mind, though they can attend to what they read or hear, are unapt to dwell upon it in the way of subsequent meditation."

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* On Style, p. 82.

† Comp. below, Part IV, chap 1

"The usual expedient, however, of employing a *prolix* style by way of accommodation to such minds, is seldom successful. Most of those who could have comprehended the meaning, if more briefly expressed, and many of those who could not do so, are likely to be bewildered by tedious expansion; and being unable to maintain a steady attention to what is said, they forget part of what they have heard, before the whole is completed. Add to which, that the feebleness produced by excessive dilution, (if such an expression may be allowed,) will occasion the attention to languish; and what is imperfectly attended to, however clear in itself, will usually be but imperfectly understood. Let not an author, therefore, satisfy himself by finding that he has expressed his meaning so that *if* attended to, he cannot fail to be understood; he must consider also *what* attention is likely to be paid to it. If on the one hand much matter is expressed in very few words to an unreflecting audience, or if, on the other hand, there is a wearisome prolixity, the requisite attention may very probably *not* be bestowed." *

Prolixity, then, is worse than extreme conciseness. The latter, though imperfectly understood, may stimulate attention and reflection, and lead to subsequent examination of the subject. The former does but weary and disgust. It must be granted that prolixity is very common in the pulpit. Preachers often have to prepare and preach when their minds are not in a creative mood. It seems their duty to say something, and custom requires that, however unfruitful the subject and however unfavorable their own state of mind, they shall continue for at least a certain number of minutes.† Under such circumstances a man's ideas are not clear, and in the feeble struggle to express them, he inevitably becomes prolix.

There are several means by which we may avoid too great conciseness without falling into prolixity. One of these is *repetition*. In some cases it is well to repeat the statement, in the same words. More commonly, we may "repeat the same sentiment and argument in many different forms of expression; each in itself brief, but all together affording such an expansion of the sense to be conveyed, and so detaining the mind upon it, as the sense may require." This repetition must of course not be a mere tautology. The thought must be presented in some other view or some new relation. "What has been expressed in appropriate terms may be repeated in metaphorical; the antecedent and consequent of an argument, or the parts of an antithesis may be transposed; or several different points that have been enumerated, presented in a varied order, &c." * Another means is by varied *illustration*. After stating the thought as clearly as can be done within a moderate compass, we may present various illustrations of it, or of its different aspects. These interest the hearer, and detain his attention on the matter in hand, until he becomes perfectly familiar with it, and yet not weary of it. There is no more remarkable example of this than Chalmers. His sermons often consist of a single idea, which is held up in different lights, turned over and over, and round and round, until we have seen every facet it possesses; and yet each of these aspects is made so bright with fresh illustration, so brilliant with hues of fancy, that we cannot grow weary.† In this, as in some other respects, Chalmers is one of the worst models to be imitated, but one of the most profitable examples to be studied. And a third means of gaining the requisite expansion without prolixity, is *division*. The matter presented, however minute, may often be divided into several points, just as we divide larger topics;

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* Whately, p. 301–2.

† Comp. Whately, p. 315.

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* Whately, p. 302–3.

† Robert Hall said of his sermons that their movement was on hinges, not on wheels.

and these points being successively stated, the whole is clearly seen.

And here let us dwell upon the fact, which the preacher cannot too carefully consider, that as in several other respects, so particularly in respect to expansion, the proper style of public speaking is widely different from that appropriate to an essay, or to anything designed to be deliberately read. This has been often stated, and in the strongest terms.

"That is good rhetoric for the hustings which is bad for a book. Even for the highest forms of popular eloquence, the laws of style vary much from the general standard. In the senate, and for the same reason in a newspaper, it is a virtue to reiterate your meaning: . . . . variation of the words, with a substantial identity of the sense and dilution of the truth, is oftentimes a necessity. . . . . It is the advantage of a book, that you can return to the past page if anything in the present depends upon it. But return being impossible in the case of a spoken harangue, where each sentence perishes as it is born, both the speaker and the hearer become aware of a mutual interest in a much looser style. It is for the benefit of both, that the weightier propositions should be detained before the eye a good deal longer than the chastity of taste or the austerity of logic would tolerate in a book." *

"Another predominant cause of the different impression which a speech produces in the closet from what it does when heard is found in the nature of the oratorical style. When Dr. Johnson furnished Boswell with the materials for an address to a committee of the House of Commons on an election petition, he added, 'This you must enlarge on. You must not argue there, as if you were arguing in the schools. You must say the same thing over and over again, in different words. If you say it but once, they miss it in a moment of inattention.' The masters of eloquence have enforced the rule. Fox advised Sir Samuel Romilly, when about to sum up the evidence in Lord Melville's trial, 'not to be afraid of repeating observations which were material, since it were better that some of the audience should observe it than that any should not understand.' Though he himself was censured for the practice, he declared it to

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* De Quincey on Style, p. 69.

> be his conviction, from long experience, that the system was right. Pitt urged a similar defence for the amplification which was thought by some to be a defect in his style. 'Every person,' he said, 'who addressed a public assembly, and was anxious to make an impression upon particular points, must either be copious upon those points or repeat them, and that he preferred copiousness to repetition.' Lord Brougham gives his testimony on the same side. The orator, he remarks, often feels that he could add strength to his composition by compression. but his hearers would then be unable to keep pace with him, and he is compelled to sacrifice conciseness to clearness. Cicero objects to the Greeks that they sometimes carried brevity to the point of obscurity. The expansion which is a merit at the moment of delivery is turned to a defect when a speech is printed. What before was impressive seems now to be verbose, and the effect is diminished in much the same proportion that it was originally increased. It was for some such reason that Fox asserted that if a speech read well it was not a good speech." *

Aristotle has distinctly declared the same thing.

> "And when they are compared, the speeches of the writers appear compressed and cramped if delivered in debate; but those of the orators, after being spoken with success, are commonplace when read in private; and the reason is, that in debate these things are appropriate. Wherefore also compositions prepared to be delivered, when the delivery is wanting, do not produce their effect, and appear ridiculous. Thus the omission of connectives, and frequent repetitions, are in the written style rightly rejected; but in the style of debate even the orators use them; for they are adapted to delivery. Yet it is necessary in repeating the same thing to vary the expression; which indeed opens a way, as it were, to the delivery: 'This is he who robbed you; this is he who cheated you; this is he who at last endeavored to betray you.'" †

In conclusion, let us remember that efforts to be perspicuous may be carried too far. It is wretchedly tiresome to hear a man carefully explaining what every one present

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* Lond. Quart. Rev., 1858, p. 272. The late Earl of Derby was remarkably diffuse.

† Rhet. III, 12.

understands beforehand, or continuing to repeat and open and illustrate what he has already made sufficiently plain. And the oratorical diffuseness just spoken of, is a very different thing from that torrent of useless words which we are so often compelled to endure.

CHAPTER III.

ENERGY OF STYLE.

THE term energy, as applied to style, includes all that we mean by such separate terms as animation, force, and passion. *Animation*, or liveliness,[*] serves to stimulate attention; it is not enough for a speaker to say what the hearer may understand if he attends; the point is to arouse him, to put life into him, to make attention easy and pleasant, and inattention difficult. For this the freshness of the thought, and the magnetic power of delivery are the chief agents; but much may also be accomplished by animation of style.[†] The term *force* is used especially with reference to arguments, and the kindred word power is applied both to arguments and to motives. *Passion* — which in its milder and more tender forms we call pathos, and in its highest form the sublime — has its effect upon the feelings, often by means of the imagination; and both force and passion aim at last to influence the will. It is thus plain, according to the view we have taken of eloquence,[‡] that the characteristic property of an eloquent style is energy Perspicuity it needs in common with the philosophical or didactic style; elegance it may possess in common with the poetic style; but energy, i. e. animation, force or passion, is its characteristic.

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[*] Campbell's term, "vivacity," is now restricted to conversation, and the lighter kinds of writing.

[†] There is a homely story of a preacher who suggested to a sleepy hearer that snuff might keep him awake, and was asked in return. "Could n't you put a little more snuff into your sermons."

[‡] See Introduction, § 2.

The chief requisite to an energetic style is an energetic nature. There must be vigorous thinking, earnest if not passionate feeling, and the determined purpose to accomplish some object, or the man's style will have no true, exalted energy. It is in this sense emphatically true that an orator is born, not made. Without these qualities one may give valuable instruction; without them one might preach what silly admirers call "beautiful" sermons; but if a man has not force of character, a passionate soul, he will never be really eloquent. There are, however, timid and sensitive men who, when practice has given them confidence and occasion calls out their powers, exhibit far more of this masterful nature than they had ever imagined themselves to possess.

The next requisite is something to say, and something regarded as exceedingly important. The mind must be full of thought, if there is to be forcible expression. That which is said must be what the speaker heartily believes to be true, deeply feels to be important, and earnestly desires to impress upon others. The preacher has peculiar advantages in respect of materials conducive to energy, if he has a familiar, profound, and ever-freshened acquaintance with the Bible. No temporal interests are so momentous as those of eternity. No other topics can impart to the mind such vigor and authority as truths which we personally know to be taught in God's Word. "A truly mighty sacred orator is 'mighty in the Scriptures.'" *

Energy of style must be considered under four heads

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* Shedd, p. 78. Comp. p. 73–82. On the propriety of appealing to the passions, compare above, Part I, chap. 8.

the choice of *terms*, the *construction* of sentences, *conciseness,* and the use of *Figures.*[*]

1. As to the choice of terms, one point is, that so far as the subject may admit we should prefer concrete to abstract terms, and particular or specific to general terms. In philosophical discussion, or in comprehensive statements, there is of course need for abstract or for general terms, but these are very unfavorable to energy of style. "The more general the terms are, the picture is the fainter; the more special they are, it is the brighter. The same sentiments may be expressed with equal justness, and even perspicuity, in the former way as in the latter; but as the coloring will in that case be more languid, it cannot give equal pleasure to the fancy, and by consequence will not contribute so much either to fix the attention or to impress the memory." Campbell proceeds to illustrate this by striking examples from Scripture.

"In the song of Moses, occasioned by the miraculous passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, the inspired poet, speaking of the Egyptians, says, 'They *sank* as *lead* in the mighty waters.' Make but a small alteration on the expression, and say, 'They *fell* as *metal* in the mighty waters,' and the difference in the effect will be quite astonishing. Yet the sentiment will be equally just, and in either way the meaning of the author can hardly be mistaken.' And the difference is wholly due to the change from specific to general terms. "'Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that

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[*] Some figures, as metaphor and synecdoche, would of course fall under the head of choice of terms, but many others would not. The division made by Campbell (followed by Whately), viz. choice of words, number of words, and arrangement of words, is simple and pleasing, but does not cover the ground. The divisions here suggested have the fault of not being mutually exclusive, but are yet practically convenient.

Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If, then, God so clothe the grass which to-day is in the field and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you.' Let us here adopt a little of the tasteless manner of modern paraphrasts, by the substitution of more general terms, ... and observe the effect produced by this change. 'Consider the flowers how they gradually increase in their size; they do no manner of work, and yet I declare to you that no king whatever, in his most splendid habit, is dressed up like them. If, then, God in his providence doth so adorn the vegetable productions which continue but a little time on the land, and are afterward put into the fire, how much more will he provide clothing for you?' How spiritless is the same sentiment rendered by these small variations!"*

In order to give animation and passion to style, there must be an appeal to the imagination. Now we can form images only of individual objects, and the image of some individual belonging to a species, as a lily, will be far more easily formed and far more vivid than that of an individual belonging to a genus, as a flower.†

Whately points out that we are seldom shut up by the nature of the subject, but can usually choose between generic and specific terms. Thus the terms can be made *more* general than the subject requires, and this is appropriate "when we wish to *avoid* giving a vivid impression, — when our object is to soften what is offensive, disgusting, or shocking; as when we speak of an 'execution,' for the infliction of the sentence of death on a criminal..... Many, especially unpractised writers, fall into a feeble style by resorting unnecessarily to this substitution of the general for the specific, or of the specific for the singular; either because they imagine there is more appearance of refinement or of profundity, in the employment of such terms as are in less common use among the vulgar, or, in some cases, with a view to give greater comprehensiveness to their reasonings, and to increase the utility of what they say, by enlarging the field of its application. Inexperienced preachers frequently err in this way, by dwelling on Virtue and Vice, — Piety and Irreligion,— in the abstract, without particularizing; forgetting that while they *include* much, they *impress* little or nothing." *

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*Campbell, Phil. of Rhet., p. 307–8. Comp. p. 309–15. See below in this chapter, under the head of Synecdoche.

† Peculiar point is often given to personal application by the use of 'thou' instead of 'you.' In the Sermon on the Mount, there are numerous and striking instances of the transition from general to particular by this means. Let one compare Matt. 5 : 21 and 23; 27 and 29; 33 and 36; 38 and 39; 6: 1 and 2; 5 (correct text) and 6; 16 and 17; 19 and 22; 7 : 1 and 3. The lesson is first stated in a general form, and then pointed at an individual hearer. But observe that this is not kept up throughout the discourse. That would look formal, and become wearisome. There are preachers who frequently employ 'thou' in a dainty, sentimental fashion, which is a very different thing.

Epithets will seldom contribute to energy. An epithet is an adjective added to a noun, or an adverb added to a verb, which does not add anything to the sense conveyed by the noun or verb, but simply brings into prominence something contained in it. Now as commonly managed by third-rate novelists, essayists and orators, epithets never render the expression forcible. Even when really ornamental, they are appropriate only to poetry and poetical prose. If you cut a bough from an apple-tree in spring to please your friends with its beauty, you would retain the twigs and leaves and blossoms; but if you wish to knock down a man with it, all these must be trimmed away. Yet when properly introduced, epithets may add force. For instance, they may bring to notice properties of an object which would otherwise have escaped attention, or cause the mind to dwell on the characteristic thus brought out, until it gets the full impression. Or they may be "so many *abridged arguments*, the force of which is sufficiently conveyed by a mere hint; e. g. if any one says, 'we ought to take warning from the *bloody* revolution of France,' the Epithet suggests one of the reasons for our being warned; and that not less clearly, and more forcibly, than if the argument had been stated at length."[*] It is, however, a matter with reference to which the young writer or speaker, particularly if he is highly imaginative, has more need to restrain than to encourage himself.

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* Whately, p. 221–2. Comp. above, Part I, chap. 3, § 2, as to general and particular morality.

Words in which the sound resembles the sense (*onomatopoeia*) will sometimes promote energy, but in oratory they must come unsought, if used at all.

Unusual words and phrases may also be energetic, because they contrast with the common and homely, so as to awaken peculiar interest, like a visitor or a foreigner.[†] Yet if the visitor be a reserved stranger, or the foreigner be ridiculous, the effect is not good; and so the uncommon expressions must not be unintelligible, nor grotesque.

Anglo-Saxon words are often more forcible than the corresponding words of Latin origin. In some cases they are more specific, the Latin having furnished the general term. In other cases they have the power of association, having been connected in our minds from childhood with real objects and actions, while the Latin term represents only ideas. Others are more forcible because shorter, so as to strike a quicker blow, while on the contrary some long Latin words are energetic, because so ponderous and sonorous.[‡]

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[*] Whately, p. 332 ff.

[†] Comp. Aristotle, Rhet. III, 2.

[‡] Comp. Herbert Spencer on Style, p. 12–14. His theory is inadequate, but the facts are well stated.

2. Much depends, as to energy, upon the construction of sentences.*

The *periodic* structure of sentences requires special attention. The word "period" signifies a going round, a circuit, revolution, etc., and strictly speaking, a sentence would be called a period when it returns at the close to the matter with which it began. It was very common in Greek and Latin, particularly the latter, to begin with a noun in the nominative case, then make a long sentence, consisting first of adjuncts to the noun and afterwards of adjuncts to the verb, and as the closing word to give the verb. This would be strictly a period; the sentence circles round, and the last word is in close grammatical connection with the first. In English we seldom give precisely this form to long sentences, except in the inverted style of blank verse.

> "The blest in heaven, above the starry sphere,
> Their happy hours in joy and hymning spend."

But more generally, any sentence is called a period, when the sense is so suspended as to be nowhere complete till we reach the last clause. Campbell gives an excellent example: "At last, after much fatigue, through deep roads, and bad weather, we came, with no small difficulty, to our journey's end." Contrast this with what is called the *loose* arrangement: "We came to our journey's *end* at *last*, with no small *difficulty*, after much *fatigue*, through deep *roads*, and bad weather."† Here the sense would be complete, and the sentence might end, at any one of the five points indicated by italicized words. If, on the other hand, the first form were made more purely periodic, by putting the verb nearer the end, the effect would not be so good. Thus: "At last, with no small difficulty, after much fatigue, through deep roads, and bad weather, we came to our journey's end.' Here so many particular adjuncts are strung together before we reach the verb, as to become wearisome, if not confusing. The first form is better And in fact, yet a fourth form would make it in this respect better still. Thus: "At last, with no small difficulty, and after much fatigue, we came, through deep roads and bad weather, to our journey's end." * This, however, differs from the first form as to the adjuncts which are first stated, and thereby made most prominent; and this difference must slightly affect the resulting sense.

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* Comp. above, chap. 2, 2.

† Phil. of Rhet. p. 389.

"Periods, or sentences nearly approaching to periods, have certainly, when other things are equal, the advantage in point of Energy. An unexpected continuation of a sentence which the reader had supposed to be concluded, especially if, in reading aloud, he had, under that supposition, dropped his voice, is apt to produce a sensation in the mind of being disagreeably balked: analogous to the unpleasant jar which is felt, when in ascending or descending stairs, we meet with a step more than we had expected: and if this be often repeated, as in a *very* loose sentence, a kind of weary impatience results from the uncertainty when the sentence is to close." †

In speaking, "the periodic style is much less necessary, and therefore much less suitable, than in compositions designed for the closet. The *speaker* may, in most instances, by the skilful suspension of his voice, give to a loose sentence the effect of a Period: and though, in both species of composition the display of art is to be guarded against, a more unstudied air is looked for in such as are spoken." ‡ In fact, very long periodic sentences are, in speaking, to be avoided. The hearer must retain the whole period in mind, and cannot fully understand any part of it until he reaches the end; and undisciplined minds will find this very difficult.* A period concentrates its whole force into one blow; but we must not gain this energy by the sacrifice either of perspicuity or of naturalness and ease. It is sometimes advantageous to make a long sentence partly loose and partly periodical.

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* Herbert Spencer, On Style, p. 26–7.

† Whately p. 365. ‡ Ib. p. 371.

The *emphatic* arrangement of sentences, is confined to much narrower limits in English than in many other languages. In the familiar sentence, "Will you ride to town to-day?" the sense will be different according as the emphasis is laid on 'will,' or on 'you,' or on 'ride,' etc. Now in Greek or Latin, where the order of words in a sentence can be very freely varied, the emphatic word in each of these cases might be indicated by its position. But English idiom does not permit this; and the emphasis has to be determined from the connection, or must be marked by italic letters. So far as our idiom does allow inversion, we ought to employ it, and dispense with italics. In speaking, one will indicate the emphasis by the manner of utterance; but much is gained if it can at the same time be indicated by the position of the words.

The most prominent position in a sentence is the beginning, and next to this, the end. If now a word which, according to the common grammatical order, would come elsewhere, be placed at the beginning or the end, it will attract special attention; it will become one of the important, the emphatic words of the sentence. And in general, to put a word out of its ordinary place, will cause it to be specially noticed. Such inversions of order, by giving particular prominence to the most important word or clause, will often render a sentence far more energetic. Compare "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and "Diana of the Ephesians is great."† In the saying of Peter,

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* Comp. above, on Perspicuity, chap. 2, 2.

† The French cannot here invert, as the Greek and English do, and Campbell has very well remarked: "How weak in comparison

"Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee," take the common grammatical order, "I have no gold and silver," etc., and how feeble! Observe too, that here our version increases the energy by separating the adjective *none* from its substantives, and putting it at the end of the clause, the other most emphatic position.* And not only may the *predicate* thus come first, for emphasis, but many other inversions are possible. "*Not* every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." "*Now* is the accepted time."

Sometimes an emphatic word or phrase is put first, though it must afterwards be represented in its proper grammatical place by a pronoun. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" How cold and languid, compared with this, would be, "Where are your fathers? and do the prophets live forever?"† So also, "To be or not to be, that is the question." In other cases, an emphatic word which could not stand at the head of a sentence, is introduced by some pronominal phrase. We could not say, "Came forth two bears out of the wood," but we can say, "There came forth," etc.‡ "The word 'it' is frequently very serviceable in enabling us to alter the arrangement: thus, the sentence, 'Cicero praised Cæsar,' which admits of at least two modifications of sense, may be altered so as to express either of them by thus varying the order: 'It was Cicero that praised Cæsar,' or, 'It was Cæsar that Cicero praised.'" || There are also numerous cases in which a convenient inversion may be

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is the French version of Le Clerc, *La Diane des Ephésiens est une grande déesse!* How deficient that of Beausobre, *La grande Diane des Ephésiens!* How ridiculous that of Saci, *Vive la grande Diane des Ephésiens!*"

* Campbell, p. 378.

† Most of these examples are from Campbell, p. 381–3.

‡ 2 Kings 2 24.

|| Whately, p. 364.

effected by changing from the active to the passive construction. Thus: "There is a yet more signal instance of ingratitude. One of his chosen twelve disciples denied Jesus Christ, and another betrayed him." Here "Jesus Christ" is most emphatic, and ought to come first. This could be managed, but with some awkwardness, as follows: "Jesus Christ, one of his chosen twelve disciples denied, and another betrayed." All becomes easy as well as forcible by making it passive: "There is a yet more signal instance of ingratitude. Jesus Christ was denied by one of his chosen twelve disciples, and by another he was betrayed."

No sentence ought to end in a large number of unaccented syllables, as "comparable," "exquisitely," "agreeableness." It is best to end with a word which accents the last syllable, or at any rate to have the accent only one syllable from the end. In like manner, we must not close the sentence with a large number of unemphatic words. Thus: "I will give my own attention to the matter," is much feebler than "I will give the matter my own attention."

Antithesis often adds greatly to energy. E. g. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." "Thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful." "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot." Such antithetical expressions abound in the Proverbs of Solomon, as they do in the uninspired proverbs of all nations, their terseness and force contributing to give them popularity. How vigorous is the saying quoted by Quintilian: "I do not live to eat, I eat to live." In all such cases, each of the two contrasted clauses throws light upon the other, so that without losing perspicuity the expressions may be made very brief, and thus more pointed and forcible; while at the same time the contrast makes the whole statement more striking. So much does antithesis contribute to energy and brilliancy of style, that many writers and speakers employ it in great excess. This disfigures the style of Macaulay, which is in many respects so admirable. In preaching, a manifest, and especially a frequent effort to *strike*, is particularly unbecoming. And besides the violation of taste in the excessive use of antithesis, there is danger, in any single case, of violating truth. In order strikingly to contrast two things, we may unconsciously exaggerate the difference. Thus Lord Bacon, who was very fond of antitheses, and has left a remarkable collection of them,* says in the Essay on Adversity, that "prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity is the blessing of the New." But the real difference in this respect between the two Testaments is relative, and not absolute. The Old Testament repeatedly teaches the blessing of adversity, the New several times promises temporal prosperity. The former speaks mainly of prosperity, the latter mainly of adversity. But this difference in degree, Bacon converts, for the sake of his antithesis, into a difference in kind. The danger of such exaggeration is very great, and it is a sad thing to gain force at the expense of truth.

One who speaks under the influence of strong feeling is very apt sometimes to use *broken constructions.* He will be so absorbed as not to notice the syntax, or after beginning the sentence in one way, a sudden impulse will cause him to break off and end it in a different way. The most impassioned speakers and writers naturally employ such expressions most frequently; for example, they are very common in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Whenever actually prompted by real feeling, broken constructions are admissible, and forcible. But they must never be used from calculation, and must not be allowed, even when perfectly natural, to recur too often.

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* De Augm. Scient. Lib. VI. Whately has extracted a number of these, in the Appendix [A] to his Rhetoric.

Akin to this is what grammarians call *aposiopesis*, where part of a sentence is suppressed through emotion. E. g. Luke 19 : 42, "If even thou hadst known . . . . the things that belong to thy peace!" How much better would have been her destiny, it is left for silence to suggest. Luke 22 : 42, "Father, if thou art willing to remove this cup from me!" He does not go on to ask that it be removed; but, after a pause, he adds, "Yet, not my will but thine be done." Acts 23 : 9, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit spoke to him, or an angel —?" How expressive was this silence, from a Pharisee speaking in the Sanhedrim, in presence of the Sadducees. The words, "let us not fight against God," were added by some critic or copyist, who understood grammar better than rhetoric.

As regards the whole matter of energy in the construction of sentences, one may find great benefit in the exercise of recasting sentences. This would also conduce, it is obvious, to perspicuity and to elegance, but it is still more important as to energy.*

3. Energy is greatly promoted by *Conciseness.* "It may be established as a maxim that admits no exception, that the fewer the words are, provided neither propriety nor perspicuity be violated, the expression is always the more vivid. 'Brevity,' says Shakspeare, 'is the soul of wit.' Thus much is certain, that of whatever kind the sentiment be, witty, humorous, grave, animated, or sublime, the more briefly it is expressed, the energy is the greater, or the sentiment is the more enlivened. . . . . As when the rays of the sun are collected into the focus of a burning-glass, the

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* Practical exercises of this kind may be found in Blair's Rhetoric, Lect. XX–XXIV; also in Day's Art of Discourse, and in all the best works on composition, such as Quackenbos, Day, and Bain. Care should be taken not to become fastidious about trifles.

smaller the spot is which receives them, compared with the surface of the glass, the greater is the splendor; . . . . so, in exhibiting our sentiments by speech, the narrower the compass of words is wherein the thought is expressed, the more energetic is the expression. . . . . The very same sentiment, expressed diffusely, will be admitted barely to be just; expressed concisely, it will be admired as spirited." *

There is no more remarkable example of energetic conciseness than the famous saying of Cæsar, *Veni, vidi, vici,* I came, saw, conquered.' The studied brevity of Lacedæmonian speech has given us the word *laconic.* The orators among the American Indians have often been remarkable for brief, pithy, pointed sayings. All men, cultivated and uncultivated, appreciate brevity.

Opposed to conciseness are tautology, pleonasm, and verbosity. Sheer tautology is perhaps not a very common fault. Pleonasm, the use of words or phrases which add nothing to the sense, is quite common, and often greatly detracts from energy. And verbosity, the introduction of expressions which add something, but nothing of any real importance, is surpassingly frequent and hurtful.†

A certain high-sounding verbosity is apt to be greatly admired by very ignorant or half-educated people. But this admiration does not argue any real benefit to them, nor any real power in the speaker. "It is not uncommon to hear a writer or speaker of this class mentioned as having 'a very fine command of language,' when perhaps it might be said with more correctness that 'his language has a command of him;' that is, that he follows a train of words rather than of thought, and strings together all the striking expressions that occur to him on the subject, instead of first forming a clear notion of the sense he wishes to convey, and then seeking for the most appropriate vehicle in which to convey it. He has but the same 'command of language' that the rider has of a horse which runs away with him."*

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* Campbell, Phil. of Rhet., p. 353.

† These faults are very fully treated by Campbell, p. 358–72.

The Hebrew narrative style is peculiarly diffuse and circumstantial; and the parallelism of Hebrew poetry leads to much repetition. As used in the Bible, these are not blemishes, but positive excellences; but in our own speaking and writing we must remember that in these respects modern taste demands a different style, and that in such matters the taste of our hearers ought to be consulted.

Tautology and pleonasm may be corrected by merely striking out the superfluous words; and this should be carefully and vigorously done. To correct verbosity it is often necessary to recast sentences, and substitute other terms.

It is to be remembered that in seeking conciseness we must not sacrifice perspicuity. Sometimes a terse, pointed phrase that would not be readily intelligible to all, may yet be employed by prefixing some more diffuse statement. "The hearers will be struck by the forcibleness of the sentence which they will have been prepared to comprehend; they will *understand* the longer expression, and *remember* the shorter."† Interesting examples of this may be seen in our Lord's teaching, and in the Epistle of James.‡ In other cases a brief statement may be of such a nature as to *suggest* more than is expressed; either the intellect is set to pursuing a train of thought, or the imagination is stimulated to fill up an outline. Such exercise of the intellect and imagination, if not made too difficult, is highly agreeable to all; and the mind being thus aroused to grasp the subject actively, will hold it much more firmly than if it had been passively received. It is the highest type of style to be terse, and suggestive.‖

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* Whately, p. 347. † Id. p. 351.

‡ E. g. Matt. 19 : 30 and 20 : 16; 22 : 14; 23 : 12. James 1 : 12 17, 27; 2 : 13, 26; 3 : 18; 4 : 17; 5 : 6.

‖ Comp. Whately, p. 356.

The great majority of young speakers and writers need with especial care to cultivate conciseness. Most of those who feel moved to write or speak are naturally fluent. They find volubility and verbosity to be easy to themselves, and acceptable to many of their hearers. An excessive luxuriance of style is much more promising than extreme barrenness; but, as Cicero remarked, it needs, like an overgrowth of grain in spring, to be pastured down with the pen.* The task often requires rigorous self-control. The lad who is thinning corn longs to leave three stalks yonder in one hill, because they all seem so large and fine. But he must remember. Three will make no more than two; nay, will make less. Some persons, on the other hand, should stimulate themselves to greater fertility in respect to style, which may be effected by improving the imagination, by familiarity with good writers whose style tends to luxuriance, and by endeavoring to speak and write under the influence of a more stirring passion, or a more tender sentiment.

And it must not be forgotten, that while diffuseness is unfavorable to energy, there may be a *profuseness*, as in Cicero, Chalmers, De Quincey, Gladstone, which is highly energetic. The former spreads sluggishly over a wide expanse, the latter pours onward in a rushing torrent. Longinus compares the impassioned style of Demosthenes to a storm, or a thunderbolt, that of Cicero to a conflagration, wide-spreading, all-devouring, long-continuing. Even repetition, which is often necessary in order to perspicuity, and which many preachers make distressingly feeble and tedious, may be so managed by a man deeply in earnest as to be but strong blows in quick succession.

4. Perhaps the chief element of energy in style is the use of *figures of speech.*† Passionate feeling, whether anger,

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* De Or. II, 21, 23.

† This topic may be found copiously treated in any of the familiar works on Rhetoric, particularly in some recent works, as those of

fear, love, or the emotion of the sublime, naturally expresses itself by means of bold imagery, — bold, though never elaborate or far-fetched.

Figures are sometimes to be considered rather as belonging to the *materials* of discourse than to the style. Thus, apart from the expression of an idea, some comparison may be introduced by way of proof or elucidation. Usually, however, figures are employed as a means of *expressing* the thought, although they may add something to the expression, and are thus properly regarded as a part of style.

METAPHOR is more conducive to energy than *comparison.* The latter is useful in order to perspicuity or to elegance, but is apt to be avoided in impassioned or otherwise energetic discourse. It has been often remarked that in Demosthenes' great oration on the Crown, where he had so much at stake, and speaks with such directness and force and vehemence, there is but a single comparison, and that couched in two words. Yet comparisons may sometimes, from the nature of the subject-matter, be exceedingly impressive. "His eyes were as a flame of fire, and his voice as the sound of many waters." "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be." "The ungodly . . . . are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

The metaphor assumes or implies a resemblance or an analogy, without stating it as in the comparison, and is thus more condensed and terse. Where a metaphor would not be readily intelligible, it may be combined with a comparison or made plain by some additional term. A great multitude of metaphors have become so familiar, that they no

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Day, Bain, Haven, and Hart. Lord on Figurative Language has an excellent collection of examples from Scripture, some of which are cited below. Usage has not made a well-established distinction between the terms *figure* and *trope,* but the latter is commonly applied only to certain figures, particularly metaphor, metonomy, and synecdoche longer possess any special force; but in the many that never wear out, and in the unlimited range of new invention and combination, metaphors present to the orator an inexhaustible source of energetic expression. It is imagination that must produce them, and good taste that must regulate their use. Inexperienced speakers often employ metaphors that are incongruous in themselves, or carried out into ridiculous or wearisome detail. But much will depend on subject, occasion and feeling. Even Shakspeare's often condemned example of a mixed metaphor, "To take arms against a sea of troubles," is allowable and natural in Hamlet, when frenzied and meditating suicide, and speaking to himself alone.*

The SYNECDOCHE is also favorable to energy. When a part of a thing is taken for the whole, or the species for the genus, the expression is apt to be more animated and suggestive; just as we have already seen that particular or specific terms are more energetic than general terms "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks," is immensely more forcible than to say in general that they will convert their weapons of war into implements of agriculture.

HYPERBOLE, or saying more than is meant, is very natural to a person so absorbed in the contemplation of a particular object or subject as to exaggerate its comparative importance, or to one so intensely excited that all ordinary expression seems to him tame. It is also allowable in any case where one knows that the exaggerated language need not be misunderstood, and desires to make a deep impression as to an important fact. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." (John 21 25.) Such expressions are particularly natural to the fervid Oriental mind, and they have great power with the masses of men. The Apostle Paul is remarkable for hyperboles, and for strong language of every kind. His impassioned expression, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren" (Rom. 9 : 3), is best understood as an instance of hyperbolical language, and can be appreciated only in proportion as we sympathize with his patriotic and pious ardor and devotion. Our Lord's teaching has a singular and very striking peculiarity in the use of extreme cases to set forth a principle. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." When he himself was smitten on the cheek, we do not read that he turned the other. It was an extreme, hyperbolical way of stating the injunction not to strike back; and though sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented, the statement is one which no man ever forgets. Compare the expressions, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother," etc (Matt. 6 : 3; Luke 14 : 26.) As a teacher of men, our Lord used a great variety of expedients for stimulating their languid attention, for compelling them to remember and reflect. Many a phrase of his fails to be understood unless we bear this in mind, and his example shows that such efforts may be made in a spirit and tone wholly unlike that of "sensation" preachers.*

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* Comp. Haven's Rhet. p. 111.

PERSONIFICATION, representing or addressing an inanimate object as if it had life, sometimes imparts to discourse great animation and beauty, and even passionate energy Examples of it abound in the Scriptures, as well as in all poetry and oratory. The personification of Wisdom in the Proverbs of Solomon is very striking, and has been generally supposed to contain an allusion to a real person, the

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* As to the danger of our falling into extravagance, see near the end of this chapter.

Word of God. Personifications of the Church are often carried further in preaching than is wise. Our language presents unusual facilities for this figure, from its unique peculiarity of treating all names of things as of the neuter gender, so that to call an inanimate object "he" or "she" will at once make a personification. We must be careful not to abuse this advantage. All high-wrought imagery must be sparingly employed.*

APOSTROPHE consists in "turning away" from our audience, and addressing some person or thing, usually one of which we had been speaking. If it be a *thing* that is thus addressed, there is *also* a personification. "It can not be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets," etc. (Luke 13 : 33.) But there may be apostrophe to a real person, and there is often personification when we only speak *of* the object personified, without addressing it. Apostrophe properly belongs to the language of passion, and even as such, it must not occur too frequently, nor be too long continued. A preacher standing with upturned eyes, and addressing some Scripture character, departed friend, or personified virtue, cannot go on through many sentences.

EXCLAMATION is sometimes akin to apostrophe, but properly distinct. Impassioned preachers are somewhat apt to use it too freely. Some say oh! ah! or alas! so often that it loses all power. On the other hand, we must not be fastidious in avoiding exclamation, where it is naturally prompted by actual feeling.

INTERROGATION is with all orators a frequent means of giving animation to discourse. Not only may an antagonist, real or imaginary, be questioned, in such a manner as to awaken lively interest on the part of the hearers, but questions are constantly addressed to the hearers themselves. Their minds are thus aroused somewhat as if called on actually to answer. It should be observed that one is liable sometimes to fall as it were into an interrogative mood, and throw so much of his discourse into the form of questions, as to produce the most disagreeable species of monotony. It is important to be on our guard against this, and when upon any occasion conscious of it, to break away by a resolute effort.

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* Comp. Whately, p. 328–30; Haven, p. 145–55.

DRAMATISM gives to discourse a life and vigor and charm that can in scarcely any other way be equalled. To personate some character and speak his sentiments, to introduce an objector stating his objections, and answer them point by point, to sustain a dialogue between two supposed persons, to reproduce some scene by dramatic description, are methods which all effective speakers more or less employ, and examples of which abound in Demosthenes, Chrysostom, Spurgeon. In the pulpit, dramatism must usually be kept within somewhat narrow limits, and must always be regulated by good taste and sobriety of feeling. Especially do imitations of action and tone require to be carefully guarded, lest they become ridiculous, or at any rate unsuitable to devout discourse.*

As to the whole matter of energy of style, grave mistakes are often committed. Some speakers imagine that they must be energetic in style and manner even when it does not suit the subject, or does not accord with their actual feelings. Now it is only strong feeling that prompts impassioned or in any wise energetic expression. To gain the latter we must cultivate our sensibilities, and must keep the mind in contact with the subject to be treated until the corresponding emotions are excited.† If little or no emotion really exists, the language of passion produces no effect, or even a contrary effect to that desired. It is one of the most important lessons a preacher can learn, not tc assume earnestness of style or delivery, when he has not earnestness of feeling.

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* Comp. Vinet, p. 459–65.

† Comp. above on Application, Part I, chap. 8.

Another serious and very common mistake is in the effort to maintain uniform energy throughout a discourse. "An author should guard against the vain ambition of expressing *everything* in an *equally* high-wrought, brilliant, and forcible style. The neglect of this caution often occasions the imitation of the best models to prove detrimental. When the admiration of some fine and animated passages leads a young writer to take these passages for his *general* model, and to endeavor to make every sentence he composes equally fine, he will, on the contrary, give a flatness to the whole, and destroy the effect of those portions which would have been forcible if they had been allowed to stand *prominent.* To brighten the dark parts of a picture, produces much the same result as if one had darkened the bright parts; in either case there is a want of *relief* and *contrast;* and Composition, as well as Painting, has its lights and shades, which must be distributed with no less skill, if we would produce the desired effect." *

In highly passionate speaking there must be variety, alternation. In any intense physical exertion, one needs frequent change of posture, so as to bring different muscles into play, and let them relieve each other. The same thing is true as to mental excitement.† Neither the hearers, nor even the speaker himself, can keep up a *very* high excitement for more than a brief period, certainly not in a natural and healthy way. Now the most complete alternation here would be from pathos or passion to humor. The humorous writers and speakers almost always introduce pathetic passages merely for relief, and *vice versa* the principle applies equally well. But the preacher cannot relieve the minds of his hearers by any but rare and delicate touches of humor. He may, however, again and again descend from the impassioned to the quiet and easy may cause passion to swell by successive waves, receding in order to advance farther; and he must in other ways *vary* the emotions excited, just so far as will be compatible with his specific design.

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* Whately, p. 334. † Comp. Spencer on Style, p. 36.

And great mistakes are also made as to what constitutes energy of style. There is a jerky, convulsive energy, like that of Carlyle, which is by no means worthy of imitation. There is an over-wrought, exaggerated energy, which Longinus describes as "not sublime, but sky-scraping," and a turgid, inflated, would-be energy, which is nothing but bombast. And in this stirring age, especially among our American people, there is a tendency to be prodigiously excited upon small occasion, to use superlatives, exaggerated epithets, and impassioned imagery, where they are unnecessary, and therefore inappropriate.*

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* Comp. above, Part III, chap. 1, § 1. In the Dialogue de Oratoribus (printed with the works of Tacitus), chap. 20, 22, there may be found a remarkable account of the false taste prevailing abou A. D. 75, which was constantly essaying to strike or to dazzle, an which reckoned Cicero tame and dull.

CHAPTER IV.

ELEGANCE OF STYLE.

ELEGANCE of style is the product of imagination, alone or in combination with passion, and operating under the control of good taste. Any exercise of taste comprises an emotion and a judgment. The emotion excited by beauty or by its opposite, is involuntary; but the judgment that a certain object, idea, or expression is beautiful or the contrary, can be controlled and corrected, and the internal standard by which we judge, admits of indefinite improvement. He who would attain elegance of style, then, must on the one hand cultivate imagination and sensibility, and on the other must seek, by thoughtful contemplation of the truly beautiful, to improve his taste.*

Elegance, in speaking, is less important than perspicuity or energy, but it greatly contributes to the objects of even the most serious discourse. Real elegance will of course be widely modified by subject, occasion and design; and thus modified, it is free from all just objection, and worthy of very earnest pursuit.

Aristotle remarks: "The first style of rhetoric was formed on that of poetry, witness the style of Gorgias ; and even at the present time the majority of ignorant people fancy that such orators speak most delightfully ; this however is not the case, but the style of poetry and that of prose is distinct."† The principal object of the poet is to give pleasure ; that of the orator is to convince, impress, persuade. For the former, beauty is the most important element of style; for the latter, it is thoroughly subordinate to perspicuity and force. There is a similar, though not equal difference between a history and a romance. In holiday speeches, and all set orations, to please becomes a more prominent object, and here the style of poetry is more nearly approached.

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* Comp. above, Part III, chap. 1, § 2, 2, on Improvement in Style

† Rhet. III, 1.

This important difference between oratory and poetry is strikingly illustrated by Adam Smith, who contrasts dancing with walking, and singing with speaking.

> "Were I to attempt to discriminate between Dancing and any other kind of movement, I should observe, that though in performing any ordinary action, — in walking, for example, across the room, a person may manifest both grace and agility, yet if he betrays the least intention of showing either, he is sure of offending more or less, and we never fail to accuse him of some degree of vanity and affectation. In the performance of any such ordinary action, every one wishes to appear to be solely occupied about the proper purpose of the action; if he means to show either grace or agility, he is careful to conceal that meaning; and in proportion as he betrays it, which he almost always does, he offends. In Dancing, on the contrary, every one professes and avows, as it were, the intention of displaying some degree either of grace or of agility, or of both. The display of one or other, or both of these qualities, is, in reality, the proper purpose of the action; and there can never be any disagreeable vanity or affectation in following out the proper purpose of any action. When we say of any particular person, that he gives himself many affected airs and graces in Dancing, we mean either that he exhibits airs and graces unsuitable to the nature of the Dance, or that he exaggerates those which are suitable. Every Dance is, in reality, a succession of airs and graces of some kind or other, which, if I may say so, profess themselves to be such. The steps, gestures, and motions which, as it were, avow the intention of exhibiting a succession of such airs and graces, are the steps, gestures, and motions which are peculiar to Dancing. . . . . The distinction between the sounds or tones of Singing, and those of Speaking, seems to be of the same kind with that between the steps, &c., of Dancing, and those of any other ordinary action. Though in Speaking a person may

show a very agreeable tone of voice, yet if he seems to *intend* to show it, — if he appears to listen to the sound of his own voice, and as it were to tune it into a pleasing modulation, he never fails to offend, as guilty of a most disagreeable affectation. In Speaking, as in every other ordinary action, we expect and require that the speaker should attend only to the proper purpose of the action, — the clear and distinct expression of what he has to say. In Singing, on the contrary, every one professes the intention to please by the tone and cadence of his voice; and he not only appears to be guilty of no disagreeable affectation in doing so, but we expect and require that he should do so. To please by the Choice and Arrangement of agreeable sounds, is the proper purpose of all music, vocal as well as instrumental; and we always expect that every one should attend to the proper purpose of whatever action he is performing. A person may appear to sing, as well as to dance, affectedly; he may endeavor to please by sounds and tones which are unsuitable to the nature of the song, or he may dwell too much on those which are suitable to it. The disagreeable affectation appears to consist always, not in attempting to please by a proper, but by some improper modulation of the voice." *

So in poetry the "proper purpose" is to give pleasure · and we simply require that it be skilfully adapted to that purpose. If poetry also instructs, or moves to action, that is something incidental, or subordinate to its main design. The same thing is true of novels, and all other prose writings belonging to what is called "light literature." But in oratory, as we have seen, the proper purpose is very different, and entertainment, the gratification of taste, has place only as subsidiary to conviction and persuasion. Especially is this true of the *preacher*, who is supposed to have everywhere a practical and thoroughly serious, if not a uniformly solemn purpose. And to preaching beyond almost every other variety of public speaking, applies the following instructive and convincing passage from Henry Rogers:

"If a speaker is in earnest, he never employs his imagination as the poet does, merely to delight us, nor indeed to delight us at all — except as appropriate imagery, though used for another object, necessarily imparts pleasure. For this reason, illustrations are selected always with reference to their force rather than their beauty; and are very generally marked more by their homely propriety than by their grace and elegance. . . . . Everything marks the man intent upon serious business, whose sole anxiety is to convey his meaning with as much precision and energy as possible to the minds of his auditors. But with the poet, whose very object is to delight us, or even with the prose writer, in those species of prose which have the same object, the case is widely different. He may employ two or more images, if they are but appropriate and elegant, where the orator would employ but one, and that perhaps the simplest and homeliest; he may throw in an epithet merely to suggest some picturesque circumstance, or to give greater minuteness and vivacity to description; he may sometimes indulge in a more flowing and graceful expression than the orator would venture upon; that is, whenever harmony will better answer his object than energy. What does it matter to him who is walking for walking's sake, how long he lingers amidst the beautiful, or how often he pauses to drink in at leisure the melody and the fragrance of nature? But the man who is pressing on to his journey's end cannot afford time for such luxurious loitering. The utmost he can do is to snatch here and there a homely floweret from the dusty hedge-row, and eagerly pursue his way. So delicate is the perception attained by a highly cultivated taste of the proprieties of all grave and earnest composition, that it not only feels at enmity with the meretricious or viciously ornate, but immediately perceives that the greatest beauties of certain species of prose composition would become little better than downright bombast, if transplanted into any composition the object of which was serious. We may illustrate this by referring to a passage of acknowledged beauty, — the description, in the 'Antiquary,' of the sunset preceding the storm there so grandly delineated. 'The sun was now resting his huge disc upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilded the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had travelled the livelong day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and falling monarch. Still, however, his dying splendor gave a sombre magnificence to the massive congregation of vapors, forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers, some touched with gold, some with purple.

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* Adam Smith, quoted by Whately, p. 386

some with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid coloring of the clouds amidst which he was setting.' No one in reading this passage can help admiring its graphic beauty: the numerous epithets, considering the purpose for which they are employed, — that of detaining the mind upon every picturesque circumstance, and giving vividness and fidelity to the whole picture, — appear no more frequent than they ought to be. But suppose some naval historian, who has occasion to narrate the movements of two hostile fleets (separated on the eve of battle by a storm), should suddenly pause to introduce a similar description; — would not the effect be so ridiculous, that no one could read to the end of the passage without bursting into laughter?" *

We can now easily understand why some preachers care too much for embellishment. They take a wrong view of their office, or at any rate are influenced by a wrong motive. They aim too much at *entertaining*, at *gratifying* the audience. They do not feel the seriousness of their work, the solemnity of their position. While perhaps really desiring to do good, they dwell too much on the necessity of pleasing the people in order to profit them. And aware that many hearers care only, or chiefly, to be entertained, aware that they talk in going home not of the truth, but of the performance and the performer, such preachers too readily yield to this apparent demand, and set it before their minds as a distinct if not a principal object to please. But if the earnest desire to do men good quite swallows up the wish to please them, if the sense of responsibility to God rises superior to concern for men's criticism, then the preacher's style will have only such modest beauty as is easily kept in its proper place. And when he is tempted to yield to the false taste of many, it may help him to remember that the desire to please is very apt to efeat itself His elaborate prettinesses will not only grieve the devout and disgust the really intelligent, but will soon pall upon the taste of those he sought to win, who will have all the while in their hearts a vague feeling that this sort of thing is unworthy of him, and will presently begin to find it rather tiresome to themselves.*

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* Henry Rogers on Sacred Eloquence, in "Reason and Faith, and other Essays," p. 213.

On the other hand, some preachers very unwisely take pains to avoid the beautiful. There are thoughts which naturally incline to blossom into beauty; why sternly repress them? There are grand conceptions which spontaneously clothe themselves in robes of majesty, and march forth in a stately but native dignity. And besides subjects that naturally shine and blaze, there are many very commonplace topics which the preacher must be constantly bringing to view, and which will gain a much more interested attention, from even the most devout hearers, if delicately touched with some hues of fancy. It is a noble thing thus to take important truths which have grown dull by use, and give them new brightness. This must not go so far that the attention of the speaker, and so that of the hearers, is drawn to the beauteous garb rather than to the truth itself. Far better leave the truth unadorned, to win such notice as it can.† But this excess will be readily avoided, if one has good taste and a serious purpose. Vinet has well said that the really beautiful excludes the pretty.

They who are so afraid of elegance, forget that a native beauty, and even some ornament of style, is not of necesity unfavorable to perspicuity.‡ They forget that the beautiful and the useful are in nature often closely connected; that the blossoms of the apple-tree, and the silks of the corn, are remarkable for their rich and varied, but delicate beauty. The fanciful style of some preachers is as little appropriate as if one called to build the family a home, should build a garden bower; but a family mansion may be thoroughly suited to convenience and comfort, and yet have a pleasing form, and even a certain moderate ornamentation.

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* Comp. Vinet, p. 349.

† Comp. as to Illustrations, Part I, chap. 7, § 3.

‡ Comp. Whately, p. 305.

True energy of style is often at the same time elegant. Impassioned feeling often cannot express itself otherwise than by bold images, and these, though chosen for their strength, may also have an unstudied beauty. A painted cheek is an abomination; but let there be high health, and animated feeling, and without an effort or a thought the cheek takes to itself a color most bright and fair. The Creator meant that it should be so; are you wiser than the Creator?

It should be added that quotations, whether of verse or prose, which are made merely or even chiefly for their beauty, can never be appropriate in preaching. The flowers suitable in serious discourse are never artificial flowers. Especially unbecoming is the introduction of ornamental passages from poets well known to be grossly irreligious. Some preachers make themselves worse than ridiculous by "spouting" Byron.

Elegance of style depends especially upon *terms*, *arrangement*, and *imagery;* and there is much true elegance in that *simplicity* of style which is, on every account, so much to be desired.

1. The most energetic terms are often at the same time the most elegant; so that we gain the latter excellence while seeking the former.* But this is not always the case. Some highly forcible expressions have to be avoided because they are indecent or vulgar. And if ever *slang* phrases are employed by a preacher, it ought to be under very peculiar circumstances. Ideas which are too painful must not be expressed in the most forcible terms, but softened. The use

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* Comp the discussion of energetic terms in the foregoing chapter

of words too grand for the subject, is a very common offence against elegance. Whether an energetic expression shall be rejected because inelegant is a question on which no general rule can be given; each case must be decided on its own merits. But words which really weaken the expression or do not at all strengthen it, must scarcely ever be employed because of their supposed elegance.

John Foster, in one of his celebrated Essays, urges very earnestly that one reason for the aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion, is the too frequent employment in preaching of the technical terms of theology, and the language of Scripture. He himself took great pains to avoid both. No doubt there is sometimes an excessive multiplication of such terms, giving the sermon a dialect quite different from the language of ordinary life, and this error good taste must correct. But the aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion is much more largely the cause than the effect of this dislike to theological and scriptural terms. They wish us to tone down and refine away the characteristic *ideas* of Scripture.*

2. As to the *arrangement* of words,† we must of course avoid harsh or disagreeable combinations, unless they are necessary in order to energy. The English language is specially liable to the frequent recurrence of hissing sounds, *s*, *z*, *sh*, *ch*, etc.‡ Thus the phrase, "in Jesus's name," has an unpleasant sound.

It is also of some importance to avoid the too frequent repetition of a word in the same sentence or paragraph. Modern taste is more fastidious about this than was that of the ancients. We must not, through mere desire for variety, sacrifice anything important to the sense, a fault into which our common English version has very often fallen. Thus in Romans, chap. 4, the word 'reckon' occurs very often being the leading term of the argument, and our version renders by three different words, 'count,' 'reckon,' and 'impute,' thus seriously obscuring the verbal connection, with no gain but that of variety. Where, however, the connection of our discourse does not really require the repetition of the same word, it should be suitably varied. There is in English special danger that certain pronouns, particularly *it*, *that*, and *which*, and the preposition *of*, will be too often repeated in quick succession.

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* On the advantages of a "Scriptural tone" in sermons, see Vinet, p. 420.

† The *number* is here a matter of subordinate importance; there may be an elegant conciseness or an elegant diffuseness, though the former is best for energy and often best for perspicuity.

‡ Foreigners sometimes call it the "snake language."

Antithesis will frequently contribute to elegance, as well as to energy;* but if used too freely, it tends to stiffness, or to monotony.

Alliteration was a leading peculiarity of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and is still somewhat frequently employed in poetry and even in prose. Chalmers was very fond of it. In prose, especially in preaching, it should be used but rarely, and in an easy, unstudied fashion.

Sentences are of course most elegant when smooth and flowing. But better harsh strength than smooth weakness. "You may break grammar, if you break hearts." And a constant *succession* of smooth and graceful sentences will inevitably become monotonous. Gibbon wearies by his uniform stateliness. Even Prescott's style would be improved by the occasional introduction of sentences quite different in pattern.

The parts of a sentence are often so proportioned as to give it a *rhythmical* movement. Excited feeling naturally tends to rhythmical expression, as is sometimes seen even in voice and gesture. The metre of poetry is one species of rhythm. The perfectly regular recurrence of the same movements is, however, too labored and deliberate a thing to be natural in speaking. Accordingly, as Aristotle remarks, the rhythm of oratory must never become metre. The only exception, if there be one, is in funeral orations and the like, where there is high-wrought but somewhat artificial feeling, and where, as in poetry, the principal object is to please.* It is not proper, in order to rhythm in prose, to throw in clauses simply for that purpose, as is often done by Johnson and his imitators; † but the expressions may be so chosen and so coördinated as to give the whole a rhythmical movement. This had best be spontaneous, but need by no means be unconscious; one may lawfully give, even in extemporaneous speech, a certain occasional and subordinate attention to the proportion of clauses, the harmonious flow of the sentence. It is obvious that the *cadence*, or concluding strain of a sentence, is in this respect most important. Here, as was seen with regard to energy, we must avoid ending with a number of unemphatic words or unaccented syllables. This requires special care in English. We have not only a great number of such terminations as -osity, -ility, etc., but many words like occupancy, profitableness, in which, according to the Gothic tendency, the accent remains on the first or leading syllable, no matter how many syllables may be added, and which are exceedingly ill-suited to close a sentence. Moreover, it does not sound well if a sentence containing one or more long clauses, should end with a short one. Many points of this sort might be noted; but after all, rhythm in prose scarcely requires particular rules, being sufficiently regulated by the ear, if once a man has learned to give it some attention, in his own speaking and writing, and in the books he most carefully reads. It is highly important that the rhythm of successive sentences should frequently *vary*, as is eminently the case in Burke. Milton's prose has great majesty of movement, but with hardly sufficient variety, and with some sacrifice of practical directness. Robert Hall's style is in this as in most respects very admirable; yet even he would have more power with a miscellaneous audience if now and then a sentence were in its ending more abrupt—some quick, sharp saying that would crack like a whip. The sermons of Addison Alexander have in some impassioned passages a magnificent rhythm.*

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* Comp. in the preceding chapter.

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* In some pathetic passages of Dickens, a whole paragraph might be cut up into blank verse, without changing a word. But this would be intolerable in an appeal to a jury, or in a sermon.

† Comp. Whately, p. 353–5.

3. Most of the *figures* which give energy to style, will also impart elegance. Those which especially conduce to elegance are simile, metaphor, and personification. A comparison, or simile, which has any considerable value in the way of elucidation or proof, becomes much more valuable if also beautiful, because then it gains a pleased and sympathizing attention. That which does not contribute to perspicuity or force, must never be introduced merely as an ornament, for this, as we have seen, belongs to poetry, but not to practical and serious discourse. Every one is familiar with the use of comparisons and metaphors to elevate or to degrade. No better example can be found than that often quoted from Aristotle.† The poet Simonides was requested by the victor in a mule-race to write a triumphal ode; and offended at the small present offered, said he would not write about *half-asses*, which was the common

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* The subject of melody and harmony of style is discussed at length by Day, p. 218–46. See also Hoppin, p. 293–7. The ancients were much more attentive to this matter than the moderns. Besides Aristotle (Rhet. VIII, 3), Cicero treats of rhythm at great length, and boasts that no one has ever before discussed it so thoroughly (Orator, cap. 50–71). Quintilian is more brief (IX, 4, 45–120), and cautious against overdoing the thing. With this caution, Cicero's observations will be found quite instructive.

† Rhet. III, 2.

Greek name for mules. But a larger present being offered, he addressed them in an ode as "daughters of storm-footed steeds." It is much to know which side of a subject to select.*

4. No quality of style is more frequently urged as an object of pursuit than *Simplicity*. Every one feels that simplicity is a great excellence. But when we attempt to analyze simplicity, and show how it may be attained, we are apt to find unexpected difficulty. The opposite of a simple style would seem to be one that is involved, or that is too elaborate, or that is overloaded with ornament. In the first case we might say that a simple style does not roll up an idea in manifold clauses and sentences, which we must painfully unroll in order to perceive it, but spreads out the idea at once to our view; that it is direct, and easy to understand. Then usage extends the term to denote a style that is not excessively labored, or in any respect artificial, that does not appear to be produced with great effort. And in a particular variety of this use we mean by it a style that has no elaborate ornamentation.

A simple style, then, as it unfolds the thought at once, will be perspicuous, though there may be a certain kind of perspicuity where, strictly speaking, there is not simplicity. You may make an idea plain by repeated and varied statement and illustration; a simple style makes it plain at once. In this respect simplicity demands both the conditions of perspicuity we have heretofore noticed; the language must be such as the hearers will easily understand, and it must exactly express the idea. A man is not certainly "simplifying" a thought when he is hammering it by prolonged and tedious explanation. He must find the least complicated, the most direct and readily intelligible expression, which at the same time exactly hits his meaning. Men often use familiar words, but do not so choose and connect them as to make their style simple.

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* Compare what is said of figures above in chap. ?, 4; also on Illustration, above, Part I, chap 7.

In the other case a simple style means a style which is not labored or artificial, which flows freely, and seems to be natural. If it is at the same time really perspicuous, this easy, inelaborate style is always the result of careful self-discipline, and the expression of ideas patiently reflected on and clearly conceived. There are peculiarities of natural tendency in this as in all respects, but it is a great mistake to regard true simplicity of style as a mere gift of nature. One must habitually think his thoughts into clearness, and must acquire wide and easy command of the best resources of language, if he would be able to speak simply, and yet really say something.

And when by simplicity we mean the absence of excessive ornamentation, let us beware of going to the opposite extreme. South has sharply satirized his great contemporary Jeremy Taylor, by extracting from his writings some specimens of over-wrought, fanciful ornament. "'I speak the words of soberness,' said St. Paul, and I preach the Gospel not with the 'enticing words of man's wisdom This was the way of the Apostle's discoursing of things sacred. Nothing here of 'the fringes of the north star nothing of 'nature's becoming unnatural;' nothing of 'the down of angels' wings, or the beautiful locks of cherubims:' no starched similitudes introduced with a 'Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion,' and the like. No, — these were sublimities above the rise of the Apostolic spirit. For the Apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world in plain terms that he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not should be damned. And this was the dialect which pierced the conscience, and made the hearers cry out, Men and brethren, what shall we do? . . . . In a word, the Apostles' preaching was therefore mighty and successful, because plain, natural and familiar, and by no means above the capacity of their hearers: nothing being more preposterous, than for those who were professedly aiming at men's hearts, to miss the mark by shooting over their heads." * The expressions quoted by South are, at least as they here stand, supremely ridiculous for a sermon; and unfortunately they are sometimes paralleled in our own day. But simplicity by no means excludes all ornament in all cases. Many a thought, no doubt, is "when unadorned, adorned the most," because, like a statue without drapery, its own form is beautiful. But, as we have heretofore observed, there are thoughts which naturally so stimulate the imagination that of its own accord it clothes them in a garb of beauty. And there is many a truth which must have some touches of fancy, or it is not fairly presented. The maiden on a summer evening, arrayed in simplest white, yet knows how, by the bit of ribbon skilfully placed, or the rose-bud in her hair, to give the whole a modest charm. Shall the simple garb of truth be denied a like advantage? Wherever simplicity is to have its full attractiveness, and to exert its true power, it must not be bald simplicity; there is sure to be now and then some little quaintness of phrase or delicate tinge of fancy, some slight felicity of expression, which lifts it above the vulgar or the commonplace. In using colloquial phrases, those homely English idioms which have such power, it is curious to observe how Bunyan, or Spurgeon, will divest them of vulgarity and give them an air almost of refinement, by this light play of fancy.

Two things ought to be here borne in mind. The worst of all affectations in style is the affectation of simplicity. It is like affected modesty in an immodest woman. And a style may have real beauty and real power that is not simple. The processional pomp of Milton's grand sentences, the revolving splendors of Chalmers, the lightnings and auroras of Chrysostom and Jeremy Taylor, may re-

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* Quoted by Henry Rogers, p. 219.

mind us that simplicity is not everything. These men however, are often simple; they have too much good taste and natural feeling to employ inflated diction when speaking of common things. And so those who seek to be habitually simple must let their style vary according to subject and feeling. While usually confining themselves to those medium tones which suit the common thought and experience of mankind, let them be willing, and be able, to range the whole gamut of expression, to rise and fall as occasion demands or passion prompts.

"The constant employment of one species of phraseology which all have now to strive against, implies an undeveloped faculty of language. To have a specific style is to be poor in speech. . . . . As in a fine nature, the play of the features, the tones of the voice and its cadences, vary in harmony with every thought uttered; so, in one possessed of a fully-developed power of speech, the mould in which each combination of words is cast will simply vary with, and be appropriate to the sentiment. . . . . The perfect writer will express himself as Junius, when in the Junius frame of mind; when he feels as Lamb felt, will use a like familiar speech; and will fall into the ruggedness of Carlyle when in a Carlylean mood. Now he will be rhythmical and now irregular; here his language will be plain and there ornate; sometimes his sentences will be balanced and at other times unsymmetrical; for a while there will be considerable sameness, and then again great variety." *

From all this it will appear that true simplicity of style, which is at once intelligible, which has an easy movement, a natural beauty and a natural variety, requires patient thought, disciplined imagination, and thorough mastery of language.†

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* Spencer, Essay on Style, p. 46.

† In the way of caution against mistakes as to simplicity, see a good discussion in Moore's Thoughts on Preaching (London, 1869), chap 6.

CHAPTER V.

IMAGINATION, IN ITS RELATION TO ELOQUENCE.

IMAGINATION, as we have already seen, is among the leading characteristics of eloquence.* It plays a highly important part in the construction of discourse, and style, and it has much to do even with the invention of materials. Though repeatedly referred to, under these several heads, it is thought to require at this point some more particular discussion, as to its office in oratory, and the means of its cultivation.

§ 1. USES OF IMAGINATION TO THE ORATOR.

The popular conception of imagination still is, that it assists the orator only in the way of producing high-wrought imagery, in letting off such fire-works of fancy as sophomores affect, and half-educated people admire. But modern psychology tends more and more to assign imagination a high position and a wide and varied domain. It is coming to be recognized as giving indispensable aid in scientific research and philosophical abstraction, in the formation of geometrical and ethical, as well as of artistic ideals, in the varied tasks of practical invention, and even in the comprehension and conduct of practical life. When entering some strange country, or when brought by great social convulsions into a new state of things, most men are unable, through deficiency of imagination, fully to realize the new situation, and promptly to seize upon the central and controlling forces. Accordingly Napoleon said, "The men of imagination rule the world."

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* Comp. Introduction, § 2.

This noble faculty is possessed in a high degree by every true orator. Without it, a man may be instructive and convincing, may influence others by his practical energy, his resolution and determination, but he can never exert the peculiar power of eloquence. A preacher, without imagination, may be respected for his sound sense, may be loved for his homely goodness, but he will not move a congregation, he will not be a power in the community. If on the other hand he have a perverted or an undisciplined imagination, it may ruin his usefulness. It is a matter on which preachers seldom bestow any thoughtful attention; and yet few things are so important to their real success, as the possession, the culture, the control, of imagination.

The terms imagination and fancy were once practically equivalent. The latter, as shown by the old spelling phantsy, is a corruption of the Greek term phantasy, which was afterwards reintroduced in its longer form, and assigned by usage to special senses. (Compare palsy and paralysis, and several other cases.) Addison said that he used the words imagination and fancy indiscriminately.* At the present time some writers, particularly Ruskin, are disposed to claim that there are two distinct faculties of the mind, which they would denote by these two terms. The more common, and apparently the more correct opinion is, that what we call imagination and fancy are but different forms and modes of exercise of the same faculty. We call it fancy when playing on the mere surface of things, imagination when penetrating to the heart, the essence; fancy when sportive or cold, imagination when passionate, or at least serious. Imagination "cannot be but serious; she sees too far, too darkly, too solemnly, too earnestly, ever to smile. There is something in the heart of everything, if we can reach it, that we shall not be inclined to laugh at. The 'innumerable laughter' of the sea is on its surface, not in the deep."*

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* Fleming, Vocab. of Phil., p. 194.

1. Imagination is employed by the orator in the construction of discourse. To give familiar materials any fresh interest, they must be brought into new combinations; and to form a *discourse* at all, the materials must be made into a complete and symmetrical structure. Piles of bricks and lumber and sand are as much a house, as the mere piling up of thoughts will constitute a discourse. The builder, of palace or of cabin, works by constructive imagination; and it is the same faculty that builds a speech. In fact imagination, the wonder-worker, does much more than this. It is only a lower imagination that takes fragments of material, and builds them, each fragment preserving its individuality, into a new structure; high, intense imagination fuses the materials, reduces them to their natural elements, and forms of them a structure possessing complete unity. The one process is a new composition of fragments; the other a new organization of elements. The one cements the materials together, or at best welds them together; the other makes them *grow* together, by furnishing a principle of vitality which takes up the analyzed material and organizes

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* Ruskin, Modern Painters, Vol. II, p. 166. On imagination in general, see especially Hamilton's Metaphysics, and, still better as to this subject, Porter on the Human Intellect. Ruskin, as just quoted, has an extended discussion, of great value to public speakers. See also Wordsworth's preface to his Poems. A good lecture by McCosh, on the Imagination, its Use and Abuse, has been republished as a tract by the Amer. Tr. Soc. The practical uses of imagination are pleasantly discussed in the Contemporary Review, Sept., 1869. Very little is known to have been written on the relations of imagination to eloquence. There is an address by Haven on "the Province of Imagination in Sacred Oratory," in Bibl. Sacra, Jan. 1867, or in his Studies in Philosophy and Theology, 1869. The subject would reward thorough study, and admits of much interesting and suggestive illustration.

it according to new laws. Imagination does not create thought; but it organizes thought into forms as new as the equestrian statue of bronze is unlike the metallic ores when they lay in the mine. This constructing, fashioning, organizing function of the imagination is exercised in forming a poem, or a story, but still more in forming a discourse. where there is far greater need of unity, symmetry, and adaptation to a specific design.

And not only is it needed in constructing discourses, but every paragraph, yea every sentence, is properly a work of imagination, a work of art. The painter, sculptor, architect, does not fashion merely the general outline of his work, and leave the details to chance. The whole is but the parts taken together. Each part must have a certain completeness in itself, and yet must be in itself incomplete, being but a fragment of one whole. So must it be in the construction of discourse.

2. If, as Porter says, "to invent or discover, is always to recombine, to adjust in new positions objects or parts of objects which have never been so connected before," * then imagination has no little to do with the invention of thought. What are its precise functions in this respect, students of psychology have not yet settled. There can be no doubt that it does somehow aid us in penetrating to the heart of a subject, and developing it from within; that it thus assists the work of original analysis, as well as that of exposition; though Ruskin's theory of "the penetrative imagination" is, as he virtually confesses, uncertain and obscure.†

3. The orator uses imagination in the production of images. Often the idea he wishes to present can itself be converted into an image. Imagination thus gives the masses of thought a definite shape, a clear-cut outline, and

* On the Human Intellect, § 364.

† Modern Painters, Vol. II, p. 160 ff.

sometimes makes them stand out as in a stereoscopic picture. This excites the imagination of another, and thus affects his feelings. Objects of sense affect the feelings most powerfully, and images more closely resemble objects of sense than do mere ideas. Thus if, instead of dwelling upon the idea of benevolence, we bring forward the image of a benevolent man or a benevolent action, it is much more affecting.*

And whether the particular idea can or cannot be converted into an image, we may associate with it, may group around it, by resemblance or analogy, or by contrast, some other idea or ideas which *can* be formed into images, and which will reflect their light and splendor upon the thought in hand. This is Illustration, with all its power not only to gratify the taste, but to assist comprehension, to carry conviction, and to awaken emotion.

It is thus mainly through imagination that we touch the feelings, and thereby bring truth powerfully to bear upon the will, which is the end and the very essence of eloquence. And on the other hand passion kindles imagination. Love, for instance, will cause the dullest mind to give forth some sparks of imagination. Anger, overwhelming grief, passionate supplication, will often struggle to express itself by means of the boldest images. Thus imagination and passion continually act and react, causing the one to glow more brightly and the other to grow fiercer in its blaze.

4. Another use of imagination, though not wholly distinct from the last, is in realizing and depicting what the Scriptures reveal. We have already noticed how much of the Bible consists of narrative, and how important it is that the preacher should be able vividly to describe its scenes and events.† "Historical imagination," in reproducing the past, is one of the favorite ideas of our day.

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* Comp. Part I, chap. 8, on Application.

† See Part I, chap. 5, § 1.

In the exercise of it great care must be taken that it shall be directed and controlled by thorough knowledge of the times reproduced, and true sympathy with their spirit, or we shall carry back our own experiences and our modern conceptions, and make, as historical description often has made, an utterly erroneous representation. But with this caution, historical imagination may be declared indispensable, not only to description of Scripture history, but to the just comprehension of the whole system of doctrine and duty, for all rests upon a basis of fact. Controversialists, for example, often greatly err, from failing to realize the circumstances of the primitive age, and thus misconceiving the precise aim of many a lesson or observance.

And not only as to the past. Imagination is requisite if we are justly to conceive and vividly to realize the Scripture revelations concerning the unseen world and the eternal future. Faith believes these revelations, and imagination, aroused by faith and called into its service, makes the things unseen and eternal a reality to the mind, so that they affect the feelings almost like objects of sense, and become a power in our earthly life. It may also to some extent fill out the Bible pictures of the unseen world, by following the analogies of this world; but there is here demanded a moderation and reserve, a care in distinguishing between the revealed and the supposed, which in some books and many sermons are sadly wanting.

§ 2. MEANS OF CULTIVATING THE IMAGINATION.

If this faculty has so much to do with the construction and style, and even with inventing the materials of discourse, it becomes a matter of very high importance that preachers should employ the best means of giving it thorough cultivation, and bringing it under complete control.

1. Certain *moral* qualities and habits greatly promote the noblest uses of imagination. We have seen that the highest imagination is essentially serious. Habitual frivolity, in an individual or a people, will prevent the appreciation and the exercise of this exalted faculty. "I suppose the chief bar to the action of imagination, and stop to all greatness in this present age of ours, is its mean and shallow love of jest and jeer, so that if there be in any good and lofty work a flaw or failing, or undipped vulnerable part where sarcasm may stick or stay, it is caught at, and pointed at, and buzzed about, and fixed upon, and stung into, as a recent wound is by flies, and nothing is ever taken seriously nor as it was meant, but always, if it may be, turned the wrong way, and misunderstood; and while this is so, there is not, nor cannot be any hope of achievement of high things; men dare not open their hearts to us, if we are to broil them on a thorn fire. . . . We have seen that imagination is in no small degree dependent on acuteness of moral emotion — in fact, all moral truth can only thus be apprehended; and it is observable, generally, that all true emotion is imaginative, both in conception and expression; and that the mental sight becomes sharper with every full beat of the heart; and therefore all egotism, and selfish care, or regard, are, in proportion to their constancy, destructive of imagination; whose play and power depend altogether on our being able to forget ourselves and enter like possessing spirits into the bodies of things about us."

Besides, as "the life of imagination is in the discovering of truth," it will be independent, superior to praise or blame. "Sympathy it desires — but can do without; of opinions it is regardless, not in pride, but because it has no vanity, and is conscious of a rule of action and object of aim in which it cannot be mistaken; partly, also, in pure energy of desire and longing to do and to invent more and more, which suffer it not to suck the sweetness of praise

—unless a little, with the end of the rod in its hand, and without pausing in its march."

These earnest utterances of Ruskin* relate originally to painting; but they require very slight modification to apply to oratory, and especially to preaching, where passionate love of truth and lofty earnestness of soul are so eminently appropriate.

2. Imagination is awakened and invigorated by communion with *nature.* A certain indefinable sympathy exists, by a law of our being, between external nature and ourselves. Its forms and hues have a meaning for us more subtle than language conveys, and excite in us strange longings and kindlings of soul, till we idealize all we behold. And our thoughtful observation of nature may be quickened and exalted by science. The systematic study of minerals, vegetables, animals, reveals to us new and wonderful things, teaches us to read, where we had not seen it before, the handwriting of our God. Geology acquaints us with earth's mighty past, Astronomy introduces us to the ever widening and brightening glories of the wonder-crowded universe, till the "music of the spheres" attains for us a sublime, orchestral grandeur, an unearthly sweetness, a wealth of precious meaning, which the wise Greek never knew. We need not now to people all natural objects with unseen, half-human creatures, nor need we lose ourselves in the vagueness of pantheism; our personality may everywhere indulge its longing for communion with a person, we may find in all nature the personal God.—But words are here vain If we wish for power of imagination, let us observe, contemplate, commune with nature.

3. *Art* and *Literature* may greatly aid us. Nature is by most of us very imperfectly understood and appreciated till interpreted to us by the poet or the artist. Perhaps we grew up amid glorious mountains, or beside the many-

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* Modern Painters, Vol. II, p. 166, 186.

sounding sea, and yet little knew their meaning, little felt their inspiration, till some high-priest of nature had taught us, by the pen or the pencil, how to behold and comprehend and sympathize.

Sculpture, painting, architecture, have a strange power to develop the imagination in general, and sometimes to stimulate it for particular efforts, and they can be devoid of interest to none who possess this faculty in even a moderate degree. When Andrew Fuller stopped suddenly amid the architectural glories of Cambridge, and proposed to his guide to go home and discuss with him the doctrine of justification, he betrayed that deficiency of imagination which is conspicuous in the structure and the style of his otherwise admirable sermons. There is many a preacher who could tell how some picture, perhaps casually looked at, has helped him in making a sermon; there is many a one utterly unable to tell how much the general study of works of art has contributed to develop his imagination.*

In our country few have any considerable opportunity for beholding the most inspiring works of art.† But the *poets* are accessible to all, and they are here our chief teachers. They see the analogies of external nature to moral and religious truth as most of us cannot; and they open up to us unknown depths in our own nature. From them we may learn how to observe and compare, how to depict and interpret; though we must not forget that they aim mainly to please, while we must subordinate everything to spiritual profit, and that such difference of aim should lead to great difference of method. And it is not of necessity those poets who seem to the general reader to show most imagination, but those who most kindle *our* imagination, that will in this respect be most useful. Thus Wordsworth and the Brownings are much more profitable than Tom Moore and the poems of Scott. We must seek by effort of our own imagination to conceive the poet's image, if we are to have not mere entertainment but improvement; and he is for us the best poet who awakens our imagination, gives it general direction, stimulates it by some of the most suggestive details, and leaves it to do all the rest for itself. That is to say, in order to the benefit here proposed, we must *study* poetry.

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*See some good thoughts in McCosh's Lecture, p. 39 ff.

† Many suggestive ideas of art may be derived from Ruskin's various works, and much useful information on the subject from Samson's Elements of Art-Criticism (Philadelphia, Lippincott).

There is much highly imaginative prose which has a similar value. Novel-reading, while well known to injure many, would if properly managed be to some preachers exceedingly profitable, in respect to imagination and literary taste. As a rule, one should read only the very best works of the very best novelists; and he should never read two novels in succession, but always put between them several works of a very different kind. And there is often more to be *learned* from a novel, if at an early period we turn over and find out how the story will end, or if we deliberately examine one previously read. Goethe, Edgar Poe, and many others, have given us imaginative writings not properly called tales, which may in like manner be profitable. Some of the historians powerfully appeal to and exercise the imagination of their readers; for example, Macaulay and Motley. And the great orators and preachers present to us imagination operating in precisely those methods with which we are most concerned. If one wishes to stimulate in himself the desire for affluence of imaginative diction, let him read Plato, Cicero, Chrysostom, Jeremy Taylor, Milton, Burke, Chalmers; if he wishes to chasten himself into a more sober and regulated use of imagination, so that it shall be duly subordinated to other faculties, let him read Demosthenes, Tacitus, Daniel Webster, Robert Hall. In general it must be remembered that here, as elsewhere, appetite is not always a sure guide.

4. After all, the great means of cultivating imagination, as is the case with all our faculties, is actual *exercise.* The excessive display of second-rate imagination which some men make so offensive, drives other men to the opposite extreme, so that they shrink from illustration and imagery where they are really needful, and never stop to consider how numerous and varied and surpassingly important are the functions of this much-abused faculty. Let a man freely exercise imagination, in constructing and inventing, in picturing and illustrating, in reproducing the past and giving vivid reality to the unseen world; but let him everywhere exercise it under the control of sound judgment and good taste, and above all of devout feeling and a solemn sense of responsibility to God.

PART IV.

DELIVERY OF SERMONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE METHODS OF PREPARATION AND DELIVERY.*

§ 1. READING. § 2. RECITATION. § 3. EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING § 4. HISTORY OF THE THREE METHODS. § 5. GENERAL AND SPECIAL PREPARATION FOR EXTEMPORIZING.

READING, reciting, extemporaneous speaking, — which is the best method of preaching? Though so often discussed, this question constantly recurs, not merely for the young preachers whom every year brings forward, but for many of maturer age, who are not satisfied that they have been pursuing the wisest course. It is a question affecting not only one's manner of delivery, but his whole method of preparation, and in fact all his habits of thought and expression. While not so indispensable a condition of usefulness as that a man shall hold the truth, or that he shall love his work, or that he shall be a born speaker, it is surely a matter of very great importance to one whose best energies through life are devoted to preaching, that he should study and speak in the most effective way.

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* Among the numerous discussions of this subject, attention is directed to those of Ware (in Ripley), Fenelon, Palmer, Coquerel, Kidder, Skinner, and Hoppin. See above, Introduction, § 7, on the Literature of Homiletics.

We can only inquire which method is *generally* best. No one of the three can be properly set forth as exclusive. For a process so complex as that of preparing and delivering a sermon, a process embracing such a multitude of diverse and variable elements, it ought to be manifest beforehand that only general rules can be determined. And in such an inquiry particular cases will commonly prove nothing. Some men have spoken with great power who could not write a word. Even now, when the art of writing is so generally diffused, we may hear preachers, both white and colored, who are, in some important respects, highly effective, while quite unequal to the merely mechanical task of writing a discourse. Among those who handle the pen with ease, there are men, self-educated, who have become popular and really powerful preachers, who find written composition very difficult, because they have never practised it, nor in any wise trained themselves to it. Spurgeon speaks very strongly, in the preface to his first book, of the drudgery and difficulty of composition, as compared with the ease and rapture of free speech. The one had become familiar to him, the other was new and irksome. What wonder, if on the other hand, we find many whose whole training and practice has been in writing, and for whom it is difficult and apparently impossible to speak what has not been written. Moreover, men of high talent can speak effectively in any way. Luther laid on his back, bound hand and foot, would have preached impressively. The rude drayman refuses to believe that it lessens a horse's power of draught to rein him tightly, because he has a very strong horse which can pull immense loads when reined. We call him foolish, and in regard to other questions reason in the same fashion. Each of the methods of preaching has been and is now employed by some men with admirable effect. Something in the subject or the circumstances may at times render it advisable to adopt a different method from that generally employed. Some ministers may be compelled to pursue one or another by their very peculiar constitution, or by the confirmed habits of a long life. But which is generally best?

Great extravagance is frequently to be observed in the discussion of this question, on all sides. For example, some will say that reading a sermon is not *preaching* at all. Those who argue against extemporaneous preaching very often speak as if it meant preaching without *any* preparation. Of course the proper thing to be done is calmly to consider the *advantages* and *disadvantages*, so far as they can be exhibited, of each method, and thus decide which is to be preferred.

§ 1. READING.

1. To write sermons and read them, is a method which has obviously some important *advantages*. These exist both with reference to preparation, to delivery, and to the preacher's usefulness in other respects.

(1.) Writing greatly assists the work of preparation by rendering it easier to fix the mind upon the subject Mental application is facilitated by any appropriate bodily action, and men who do not write often find it necessary to walk the floor, or, as was the habit of Schleiermacher, to lean out of a window for hours, or in general to assume some constrained posture or perform some regularly recurring act. Now writing involves a high degree of that control of body which so contributes to control of the mind, and has at the same time the advantage of possessing a closer natural relation to thought than any other act except speaking itself. Indeed every one knows how greatly writing tends to keep the thoughts from wandering.

(2.) Besides writing a sermon compels to greater *completeness* of preparation. He who prepares without writing, may, and as a rule ought to, follow out all the developments and expansions of his thoughts as far as the discourse is to carry them; but he who writes must do this, is compelled to it.

(3.) Still further, writing serves to secure, in several respects, greater excellence of *style*. As a general thing, unwritten speech cannot equal that which is written, in grammatical correctness, in precision, conciseness, smoothness, and rhetorical finish. These are highly important properties of style, and particularly with respect to the demands of some audiences, occasions, or subjects. Thus, if one is discussing a controverted point of doctrine, in the presence of persons ready to misunderstand or misrepresent him, it is even more than usually desirable that his language should be precise and unmistakable. Some hearers are very fastidious as to the preacher's finish of style. His language, as well as his manner of delivery and his dress, must be *comme il faut*, or they will have nothing to do with him. Such fastidiousness may not deserve any high respect, but of course it should not be needlessly disregarded. And sermons on an occasion of academic or other specially literary interest, are commonly and naturally expected to possess an unusual degree of flowing smoothness and elegant finish. The preacher himself, too, especially the young preacher of fine literary cultivation, is apt to be sensitive as to the minute faults of style; and writing enables him better to meet the demands of his own taste.

(4.) As regards the delivery of the sermon, this method has the advantage of placing the preacher more at his ease, both before and during the delivery. Having the sermon written, he will be preserved, and knows that he will be, from any utter and mortifying failure. It is a great relief to escape the tremulous and often distressing anxiety which one is apt otherwise to feel The preacher who means to read, has a far better chance to sleep soundly on Saturday night. It is also an advantage to be collected and confident while delivering the sermon, rather than oppressed by nervous solicitude, or driven wild by uncontrollable excitement. Some preachers find that reading saves them from an excessive volubility, or an extreme vehemence which otherwise they find it hard to control; and very many fear that without the manuscript they would be utterly crushed by the dread of breaking down.

Besides, writing sermons tends to promote the preacher's usefulness in several other respects.

(5.) The written discourse can be used on subsequent occasions without the necessity of renewed preparation, and thus frequently saves a good deal of time and labor.

(6.) The sermons remain for publication, if ever that should be desirable. Many a truly great preacher, and widely useful in his day, has left but a fading, vanishing name, while some contemporary of perhaps no greater ability, but who wrote his discourses, is still known and still useful. For example, compare Fenelon with Bourdaloue.

(7.) And then the practice gives facility in writing, which in our day is a highly important means of usefulness. The successful preacher has now many opportunities to publish, and it is apt to become a sort of reproach to him, diminishing his influence, if he is not sometimes heard from through the press.

2. To write and read has thus a number of advantages, some of them decidedly important. What, now, are its *disadvantages?*

(1.) If writing aids in thinking, it is apt to render one largely dependent on such assistance. Especially objectionable is the fact that this practice accustoms the preacher to think connectedly only as fast as he can write, when it is more natural and more convenient that a man should think as fast as he can talk.

(2.) And if writing compels the preacher to go over the ground more completely, it is not always done more thoroughly. The thinking is more extensive, but may be less intensive. Being obliged to run over the surface everywhere, the preacher may go beneath it nowhere. If many sermons are spoken with very superficial preparation, so with very superficial preparation are many sermons written. There is an immense amount of strictly extemporaneous writing. People are apt to think that what is written and read must have been carefully prepared, but they are often egregiously mistaken. A highly popular preacher once said, — of course half as a jest, — that he was so frequently compelled to get up his sermons hastily, as to make it indispensable that he should write, in order to give them at least the appearance of careful preparation.

(3.) Akin to this last is the disadvantage of consuming so much *time* in the merely mechanical effort of writing, — time which might often be more profitably spent upon the thoughts of the discourse, or upon the preacher's general improvement. True, the extemporaneous speaker, in his earlier efforts, needs to spend no less time, but rather more in preparation; but if laborious at the outset, his power of working out the details will rapidly increase, and the time necessary for this become much less, while the writer must as long as he lives spend a number of hours in the task of writing. Now the pastors of large churches in this country are often, indeed commonly, expected to do the work of several different men. Their whole time might be usefully spent in pastoral visiting, and some folks would complain of them after all. Their work on committees and boards, in attending public meetings, and helping to push forward all manner of benevolent enterprises, together with the exercise of hospitality to visiting brethren, makes heavy drafts upon their time. The wide and varied knowledge which many churches expect their pastors to exhibit, the supply of fresh material for argument, illustration, and application, so as to meet the constant demands of their position without becoming exhausted and commonplace, can be obtained only by giving much time to reading and reflection. And now, with all this upon them, here are two, frequently three sermons a week to provide, when if elaborate discourses are wanted, it would be much more reasonable to give two weeks to one sermon, than to expect two sermons in one week. How in the world preachers get through all this, is a mystery even to most of those who accomplish it. Generally, indeed, they do not get through it all. They do those things which their circumstances, opinions, or habits lead them to think most important or most pressing, and the remaining departments of the expected work are, except in the case of very remarkable men, inevitably more or less neglected. Among all the causes of those frequent ministerial changes which are so generally observed and deplored, perhaps none are so potent as the fact that pastors are expected to do more than they find practicable. Harassed, disappointed after many new schemes and efforts, and finally despairing, because he cannot study and improve himself, or cannot compass the needful pastoral work, or cannot avoid serious damage to his health, the preacher receives a call to a new field, and hoping that by a judicious use of former preparations, he may there find time for the duties he has seemed to himself to be so sadly neglecting, he goes. These changes often show faults of many kinds to exist in various quarters. But most of all they show that our pastors are overburdened. In such a state of things it becomes a very serious matter that a preacher should condemn himself, for life, to spend every week six, eight, twelve hours in merely writing out each of two sermons, and that when by far the most important and difficult portion of his preparation, the selection of text and subject, interpretation, invention of materials, and arrangement of the discourse, ought to have been completed before he begins to write.

(4.) Again, this method compels the preacher to follow out that *plan* of the discourse which he originally adopted, though in the course of preparation it may become evident that another plan would be much better. This must be a very frequent experience, especially when the writing begins before the plan has been very well matured. Who has not found, when more than half through his preparation, that thirdly ought to be firstly, or even that there had better be a different mode of stating the subject, with a corresponding modification of the whole treatment? How often will tired and hurried human nature endure to throw away all that has been written, and begin anew? Moreover, if haste or negligence in the preparation has produced faults of detail, most readers find it very difficult to correct these in the course of delivery, however clearly they may then be perceived.

(5.) This method also deprives the preacher's thinking of the benefit of all that mental quickening which is produced by the presence of the congregation. As to thoughts which are then for the first time struck out, it is true that men of rare flexibility, tact and grace can often introduce them effectively in connection with their reading. But such men establish no general rule, and the great mass of those who read have to lose such thoughts altogether, or to introduce them awkwardly and with comparatively poor effect. And besides the distinct thoughts which occur only in the act of delivery, there is something much more important in the warmer color which the now kindled and glowing mind would give to the whole body of thought, in those differences of hue and tone which change the mass of prepared material into living, breathing, burning speech Yonder stand the autumn trees, with their many colors all dull and tame beneath the ashen sky; but presently the evening sun bursts through the clouds, and lights up the forest with an almost unearthly glory. Not less great is the difference between preparation and speech, for every one who was born to be a speaker. Now whatever of this concerns the mere mode of utterance, the reader may to some extent achieve. But all that belongs to the transfigured conception, to the changed color and heightened tone of expression, which in free speaking would show itself with ease and completeness, all this he can but partially feel, and is powerless to manifest. It is true, as we are sometimes told, that by an effort of imagination when composing, one may to some extent bring before his mind the congregation, and feel by anticipation the quickening of its presence; but there are few respects in which imagination falls so far below the actual experience.

(6.) As to delivery itself, reading is of necessity less effective, and in most cases immensely less effective, for all the great purposes of oratory, than speaking. Greater coldness of manner is almost inevitable. If one attempts to be very animated or pathetic, it *will* look unnatural. The tones of voice are monotonous, or have a forced variety. The gestures are nearly always unnatural, because it is not natural to gesticulate much in reading; and they scarcely ever raise us higher than to feel that really this man reads almost like speaking. The mere turning of the pages, however skilfully done, breaks the continuity of delivery. In the midst, perhaps, of some impassioned passage, while the preacher's face glows, his action bas become varied and passionate, and he has wrought us up to a high degree of sympathy with him, presently his right hand descends and flings over a leaf, and the spell is broken; we are made to remember what we are doing, are reminded that, after all, this is not living speech, but only splendid reading, — that we are not, as a moment ago we seemed to feel, in immediate and fully sympathizing contact with the burning soul of the speaker, but "that paper there" is between us. Consider, too, that the most potent element in the delivery of a real orator is often the expressiveness of the *eye*. No man can describe this; he cannot fully recall it afterwards, and at the moment he is too completely under its influence to think of analyzing and explaining it. But every man has felt it,—the marvellous, magical, at times almost superhuman power of an orator's eye. That look, how it pierces our inmost soul, now kindling us to passion, now melting us into tenderness. And all the better that it is not felt as a thing apart from speech, but blends with it more thoroughly than gesture can, more completely than music blends with poetry, and reinforces, with all its mysterious potency, the power of thought and sentiment and sound. Now in reading, this wonderful expressiveness of the eye is interrupted, grievously diminished in power, reduced to be nothing better than occasional sunbeams, breaking out for a moment among wintry clouds.

In a word, reading is an essentially different thing from speaking. When well executed, reading has a power of its own, but it is unnatural to substitute it for speaking, and it can at best only approximate, never fully attain, the same effect.

(7.) It should be added, that reading is more injurious to the voice. Any one who is so unfortunate as to have become subject to laryngitis, will soon find that he can speak with much less fatigue than he can read. This shows a natural difference, though persons whose vocal organs are not diseased may not notice it. There are several causes which combine to produce the "minister's sore-throat," which is so common.* The practice of reading sermons is by no means the principal one, but there can be no doubt that it has some effect.

(8.) That the habit of reading should make one afraid to attempt speaking without a manuscript, is not a necessary consequence. Every enlightened defender of reading would urge that the preacher ought to practice himself in unwritten speech also, and thus be able to speak when suddenly called on; and certainly there are men who habitually read, and yet upon occasion can extemporize very effectively. Yet the manifest tendency, and the common result of habitual reading, is to make one dependent and timid; and such preachers often miss opportunities of doing good, and are sometimes made ridiculous by their inability to preach from not having "brought along any sermons." Such a slavish and helpless dependence upon manuscript is almost universally felt to be painful, if not pitiful. For this and other reasons, uniform reading is very seldom advocated, though still often practiced in some quarters.

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* See below, chap. 2.

3. The advantages and disadvantages of reading sermons having been considered, a few suggestions may now be offered to those who adopt this method.

If you read, do not try to disguise the fact. Coquerel remarks that all the artifices practiced for this purpose, "have bad grace and little success. If one reads in the pulpit, it is better to read openly and boldly, taking no other pains than to have a manuscript easily legible and properly smoothed down on the front of the pulpit; then to turn the leaves without affecting a disguise, which is useless and unbecoming. We may be certain that the hearers are not deceived in this respect; they always know when an orator is reading."*

But more. Do not attempt to convert the reading into speaking. The two are, as already said, essentially different. Is it possible for a man to speak as if he were reading? Let it be tried, and he who comes nearest to success will most effectually spoil his speaking. But on the other hand, is it really possible to read as if you were speaking? Schoolmasters often tell their boys, "Read it just as if you were talking;" and the effort to do this may help to cure the school-boy sing-song, by making the reading *more* like talking. But in fact, no one can read precisely as he talks, and no one ought to. As regards private reading and private conversation, probably no considerate person will deny this essential difference. Is it not similarly and equally true as regards public reading and public speaking? Reading before a large audience will, of course, differ from quiet reading to a few persons; and where the matter read is preceptive or hortatory, something which we personally desire to impress upon the hearers, this also will give a peculiar character to the reading. But still it is reading. The attempt to convert it into speaking is against nature, must fail, and ought to fail. "It seems to us that when a preacher, for whatever reason, reads his sermon, then instead of wishing to produce the appearance of free speaking, which is always in some measure an attempt at deception, he should make it his aim *to read well;* somewhat as when one with warmth and interest reads to his family a printed discourse." To this view of the German writer, Palmer, we should say, Yes, somewhat; but with the difference naturally produced by the fact that you are reading to a large assembly, and reading what intensely interests yourself. Palmer proceeds:

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* Coquerel, p. 177.

"To hear a good thing well read, is always a pleasure. But instead of this, one man gives himself no trouble with his reading, but drawls out the contents of his manuscript with monotonous indifference and tediousness. This is revolting. But another falls into the opposite extreme. Feeling that reading is a fault, he wishes to make amends by declaiming his sermon with a powerful pathos. This makes a contrary impression, for the more exaggerated the declamation and action in the case, the more glaring the contrast produced by the extremely prosaic act of looking into the manuscript. He who is so terribly in earnest with what he is saying, ought also, people think, to know what he wants to say; his zeal ought, as is everywhere else the case, to put words into his mouth. A modest, quiet, but expressive reading, would be more appropriate."*

We add again, that the reading may sometimes become very earnest, even if not impassioned, but it must still be reading. Let not the reader try to assume postures, gestures, or looks, such as he thinks would be appropriate to one speaking these words. To do so is not natural, it is to be an actor; and acting, however skilful and however much admired, is in the pulpit a crime, — and, as the diplomatists say, not only a crime, but worse, a blunder. Nay, let the reader know that he is reading; let him mean to read, and mean to have everybody understand that he is reading; and then let him try to read well, so as to impress the truth upon his hearers, and do them good. The observance of this distinction may also solve the much discussed question, whether it is well for one who reads to interpolate unwritten passages. If he attempts to do this without having the difference observed, it will fail. Alexander says: "The whole train of operations is different in reading or reciting a discourse and in pronouncing it extempore. If I may borrow a figure from engines, the mind is *geared differently*. No man goes from one track to the other without a painful jog at the 'switch.' And this is, I suppose, the reason why Dr. Chalmers . . . . cautions his students against every attempt to mingle reading with free speaking. . . . It requires the practice of years to dovetail an extemporaneous paragraph gracefully into a written sermon."† This is true where one wishes the two to sound alike. But if his reading does not profess nor attempt to be speaking, but simply reading, then he may, wherever there is occasion, introduce something unwritten, either in the familiar tone appropriate to some additional illustration or remark, or even in the outburst of some impassioned appeal. It will be distinct from the reading, but this may give variety; and the reading need not seem flat when he returns to it, because it did not profess to be speaking. This is in fact the practice of many skilful readers of sermons, though it may not be their theory; nature often triumphs over wrong theory, and leads men to read simply as earnest reading, and then to diverge, when they see proper, into speaking as a distinct thing. If those who read sermons would settle it well in their minds that reading is not speaking, and cannot be converted into it, and would give nature free play in their reading, the advantages of this method would remain intact, and its disadvantages would be considerably diminished. Whether, even then, reading can be made as impressive, in general, as well-prepared speaking, is another question. The remark may be added, that where defective vision, or bad light, or a low pulpit makes the reading difficult, it would be better just quietly to hold up the manuscript, so that it can be seen. If the pages are separate, and not too large, this can be done without awkwardness; and if the people see that the preacher does not pretend to be speaking, but reads with a straightforward simplicity, they will rather like his openness, and at any rate will in a few minutes grow used to what at first looked odd.

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*Palmer, Hom. p. 526–7.

†Thoughts on Preaching, p. 142.

If any one objects to all this, and insists that it is necessary, whether from the nature of the case or from the notions and feelings of the people, to keep the manuscript out of sight, and make the reading look as much as possible like speaking, then *he* is in fact saying what has not been said in this discussion, that a preacher ought never to *read* sermons at all.

§ 2. RECITATION, — TO WRITE AND REPEAT FROM MEMORY.

1. This has all the *advantages* of the first method, as regards more complete and finished preparation, practice in writing, and possession of the sermon for subsequent use and for publication. There is here, however, no preservation from utter failure, and from the dread of failure, but quite the contrary. It has two advantages which the former method does not possess. To recite one's own composition is really one kind of speaking, — and we have seen that reading is not. To recite is speaking under difficulties and disadvantages, but it is speaking. It is not against nature to treat it as such, nor impossible to make it approximate somewhat closely to the excellence and power of well-prepared free speech. The other advantage is, that recitation cultivates the memory. Any real improvement of the memory is certainly a matter of great value; men who habitually recite must always gain benefit in this respect, and with some, the results are remarkable. It must not be forgotten, however, that while recitation is in this superior to reading, it is not superior to extemporaneous speaking; for the power of verbal memorizing is really less valuable than the ability to retain ideas with only such of the words as are essential to their precise expression.

2. As to *disadvantages*, recitation labors under many of those which attend upon reading. There is here still less opportunity for correcting errors observed at the moment of delivery, for interpolating thoughts which then for the first time occur, or for giving new shape and color to the thoughts, and new force to the expressions, under the excitement of actual speaking. The mind is apt to be all in shackles, having little use for any of its faculties except memory. In the exercise of this, there is often a confusion

of local with what might be called logical memory; the recollection of what comes next on the page, and that of the connection of thought, though sometimes aiding each other, will at other times become confused and distracting. There is also with this method a still greater consumption of time in preparation. He who adopts it has not only to prepare the materials and form the plan of the discourse, as must be done upon any method, and not only to spend many hours in writing it out in full, as the reader also must do, but to give other hours, and with most men not a few, to the task of memorizing. For one who preaches two or three times a week to write and memorize all his sermons, is, if not impossible, certainly incompatible with patient and profound thinking in preparation, with wide general improvement, and with the proper performance of a pastor's other duties. The painful dread of failure is also a very serious objection to recitation, a dread from which the preacher can for no moment be free till the delivery begins, and which is then only heightened. For the extemporaneous speaker, anxiety as to failure may cause a helpful excitement; but to him who recites it brings no benefit, but only distress. We are told that Bourdaloue would often keep his eyes shut throughout the sermon; and upon being asked the reason, explained that he was afraid he might see some occurrence which would distract his attention, and cause him to forget. In so great a man this is lamentable, pitiable, — of course it is an extreme case. Furthermore, the delivery of what is recited must always be more or less artificial. Whatever may be done with occasional brief passages, such as Lord Brougham boasted his ability to introduce into an extemporaneous discourse without its being possible for the auditor to distinguish between them, we question whether any man could so recite an entire and extended discourse, — verbatim recitation, — as to prevent the audience from detecting, especially from *feeling* the difference. Certainly very few can do it, and we are discussing general questions. It is all very well to say that art must conceal art. We ask earnestly, *can* art conceal art? Who ever heard Edward Everett in one of his orations, without uneasily feeling that it was a splendid unreality, — only the finished declamation of a magnificent composition. This was all well enough in a great oration, such as that on Washington, because then one expects a work of art, and is satisfied and delighted if the art be consummate. We readily yielded ourselves to the spell, and were deeply moved, as we might be by a drama. But when a man is pleading for the life of his client, or the salvation of his country, and still more when as an ambassador on behalf of Christ, he prays men to be reconciled to God, we feel that all conscious art is out of place.

This method, then, may answer very well, if skilfully managed, for college addresses, for extraordinary orations, for any speaking in which art properly forms an important element. It is to be noticed, moreover, that to make the delivery as free and unconstrained as is possible for recitation, a man needs — unless he be one of the few who possess a wonderful memory — to have ample time for becoming thoroughly familiar with the discourse. Now the great French and German preachers who have adopted this method, usually preached much less frequently than an American pastor, and could afford to spend all necessary time in making perfectly sure that they had memorized it. Beside, Louis the Fourteenth's preachers were expected to produce a work of art, so that artificiality was not objectionable; and in the case of a fervent evangelical preacher, like Adolphe Monod, it was seldom a real recitation, but again and again would become free speech from written preparation. Wherever preacher and hearers are satisfied with the habitual practice of verbatim recitation, it may be questioned whether either party deeply feels the reality of preaching. Sydney Smith's inquiry, "What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation, and fervor of a week old?" is not only a keen sarcasm, but contains an unanswerable argument. He who recites must either be devoid of indignation and fervor, or else the delivery of these must be more or less artificial; and we repeat that conscious art cannot be tolerated by a preacher, nor manifest art by a congregation, if they justly appreciate and deeply feel the reality of preaching and hearing. Of course there may be so much of genuine earnestness in a really great preacher, as in spite of the inevitable artificiality of manner to make a deep impression; yet even then, the mode of delivery is a drawback, a serious one, and most serious precisely where the discourse ought to be most impressive.

3. But may not a man write out his sermon, and then speak freely from this written preparation? Certainly; some eminent preachers do this, and with the most admirable effect; but that is not recitation. Some of these men tell us that they do not memorize the discourse at all, in the sense of making a distinct effort to remember the words, and yet that they reproduce all the thoughts, and to a great extent in the same words, that they had written down. And as already remarked, some of those who memorize, learn by degrees to break away from recitation, and express substantially the same thought in very different language. Now this is a wholly distinct thing from recitation. When one makes no effort to remember the words, and recalls them at all only by their association with the ideas he is seeking to express, the process lacks the essential character of recitation. What then is it? The answer must be that free speaking from written preparation is only one of the varieties of what we call extemporaneous speaking. It may at first appear absurd to maintain that one may write out a

sermon in full, then preach extemporaneously, and yet say very much what he had written, and often in the same words. Accordingly, Dr. Skinner, to judge from a single expression in passing, recognizes a fourth distinct method of speaking, and calls it a reproduction from manuscript.* But what essential difference is there between this free speaking from complete written preparation, and speaking from complete unwritten preparation? Robert Hall would pursue long trains of thought without writing, and reproduce them to a great extent in the same words; Cicero mentions that Hortensius had this power; in fact, many a man of comparatively humble abilities has sometimes done likewise. If he were making an effort to repeat the words, this would be recitation, though without writing. If he makes no such effort, it is not recitation, whether the preparation were written or unwritten. Now such speaking from unwritten preparation must, as every one would agree, be classed as extemporaneous preaching; why not assign to the same class all free speaking, even where the preparation was in writing? Nor does this leave any shadowy boundary between the two methods. Though they may sometimes approach very closely, though a practised speaker may, like Brougham, pass freely from one to the other, yet they are separated by a very definite and distinct line. When one endeavors to repeat the words used in preparation, that is reciting, whether he wrote them down or did not; and when there is no effort to repeat the words, that is extemporizing, whether the preparation was partial or complete, purely mental, or written in full.

It may be doubted whether many persons can successfully manage this peculiar variety of extemporaneous speaking. It would seem that only a mind peculiarly constituted would be capable of freely reproducing what had been fully written, without falling into mere recitation. But if we are to attain just views as to the methods of preaching, it is a matter of no small importance to have it understood where the practice in question really belongs.

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* Discussions in Theology, p. 144. In another paper, p. 185, he speaks of this as the best form of recitation.

§ 3. EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING.

The technical meaning of this expression requires to be defined. Primarily, of course, it denotes speaking without preparation, simply from the promptings of the moment. The colloquial expression for this is speaking "off hand," the image being that of shooting without a rest; and the Germans have a corresponding phrase, speaking "from the stirrup," as when one shoots on horseback, without dismounting. This popular phraseology is suggestive. By a natural extension, the phrase extemporaneous speaking is applied to cases in which there has been preparation of the thought, however thorough, but the language is left to be suggested at the moment. Still further, when notes are made, as a help to preparation, when the plan of the discourse is drawn out on paper, and all the principal points are stated or suggested, we call it extemporaneous speaking, because all this is regarded only as a means of arranging and recalling the thoughts, and the language is extemporized. If one to any great extent relies on these notes for his *language*, then it is so far a recitation, where the notes are left at home, and reading, where they are kept before him in the pulpit; as a general thing, however, this is not true, and preaching from notes is fairly called extemporaneous. And one step further we go, when, as already stated, we insist that free speaking, after the discourse has been written *in full* as preparation, but without any effort to repeat the language of the manuscript, shall be called extemporaneous speaking. We think it has been satisfactorily shown that this last extension of the phrase is proper and necessary. And if so, then many eminent men, for example, Whitfield, who have usually been spoken of as reciting, were really, in part or in whole, extemporaneous preachers.

No intelligent man would now propose that preachers should habitually speak extempore, as regards the *matter.* It is true that occasions not unfrequently arise which make it important that they should be able to speak without any special immediate preparation; but this will be done most fitly and effectively by those whose habit it is to do otherwise. In truth, the fanatical or slothful men who say that they never make any preparation, deceive themselves. Most of what they say has been prepared by saying it many times before, and its substance was originally borrowed, whether from books, or from the preaching of others and from conversation. Except as to single thoughts suggested at the moment, their minds are led by association of ideas even though it be unconsciously, into what they have previously worked out. Really to extemporize the matter of preaching is as impracticable as it is improper. And it is utterly unfair to represent the advocates of extemporaneous preaching as meaning that men shall preach without preparation.

In presenting the *advantages* and *disadvantages* of this method, there must be some repetition of ideas already advanced. This is obviously necessary to completeness, and such matters will now be regarded from a different point of view.

1. Consider then, the advantages.

(1.) As regards preparation, this method accustoms one to think more rapidly, and with less dependence on external helps, than if he habitually wrote in full.

(2.) It also enables a man to spend his strength chiefly upon the more difficult or more important parts of the subject. When pressed for time, as must so often be the case with a pastor, he can get more thought into the sermon than if all the time must be spent in hurriedly writing down what comes uppermost. The choice is in such cases between extemporizing the language where the thought has been elaborated, and taking the thought extempore in order to prepare the language. This really important consideration has been forcibly stated by Wayland: "A large proportion of our written discourses is prepared in a driving hurry, late on Saturday night, and sometimes between the services on the Sabbath; and the thoughts are huddled together with little arrangement, and less meditation. . . . If the same time had been spent in earnest thought, would not the discourse have been more carefully prepared than by the simple process of writing?"*

(3.) In general, this method saves time, for general improvement and for other pastoral work. Not at first, to be sure, for the inexperienced preacher often needs more time to make thorough preparation for preaching extempore, than he would use in writing; but after he has gained facility and self-reliance, much time may be saved.

(4.) In the act of delivery, the extemporaneous speaker has immense advantages. With far greater ease and effectiveness than if reading or reciting, he can turn to account ideas which occur at the time. Southey says: "The salient points of Whitfield's oratory were not prepared passages; they were bursts of passion, like the jets of a geyser when the spring is in full play."† Any man who possesses, even in an humble degree, the fervid oratorical nature, will find that after careful preparation, some of the noblest and most inspiring thoughts he ever gains will come while he is engaged in speaking. If, full of his theme and impressed with its importance, he presently secures the interested and sympathizing attention of even a few good listeners, and the fire of his eyes comes reflected back from theirs, till electric flashes pass to and fro between them and his very soul glows and blazes and flames, — he cannot fail sometimes to strike out thoughts more splendid and more precious than ever visit his mind in solitary musing.

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* Ministry of the Gospel, p. 120.

† Quoted by Skinner, p. 146.

(5.) And, as we have before seen, there is a more important gain than the new thoughts elicited. The whole mass of prepared material becomes brightened, warmed, sometimes transfigured, by this inspiration of delivery. The preacher's language rises, without conscious effort, to suit the heightened grandeur and beauty of his conceptions; and, as Everett has expressed it in speaking of Webster, "the discourse instinctively transposes itself into a higher key." This exaltation of soul, rising at times to rapture, can never be fitly described; but the speaker who does not in some measure know what it means, was not born to be a speaker. And great stress should be laid upon the fact that besides the thoughts which then first occur to the mind, — a matter constantly remarked, — there is this effect of far greater importance produced by delivery, in changing the form and color, and incalculably augmenting the power of the thoughts previously prepared.

(6.) Moreover, the preacher can watch the effect as he proceeds, and *purposely* alter the forms of expression, as well as the manner of delivery, according to his own feeling, and that of the audience. Especially in the hortatory parts of a sermon, which are often the most important parts, will this adaptation be desirable. If preacher and hearers have been wrought up to intense excitement, then it will be proper to use strong figures, impassioned exclamations, and in general to speak the language of passion. Nothing else would then be natural, and if in such a case one's language be unfigurative and quiet, it is felt by the disappointed hearers to be flat and tame, and no vehemence of mere delivery can supply the deficiency. Still worse is the effect if feeling has not risen high, and the preacher comes to language previously prepared which is figurative and passionate. If now his manner accords, as it ought always to do, with the actual feeling of himself and his hearers, there will be a painful incongruity between the delivery and the style; if he strives to rise to his prepared language, any partial success in so doing will but put him out of harmony with the feelings of the audience. Surely no one can question that this consideration is one of immense importance. What preacher has not often found in repeating a sermon to another audience, that there was a difference, and sometimes a very great difference, in the feeling with which he and his hearers approached the closing exhortation? A few sentences then, which in conception, style, and delivery strike precisely the right key, will wonderfully enhance the effect of the whole discourse. What that right key will be, no man of oratorical nature can always foretell. Here, then, the reader or reciter must inevitably fail, while the cultivated extemporaneous speaker easily and naturally rises or falls to suit the feeling of the moment. But some one might reply, "I do not aim at high oratorical effects. I am content with more modest efforts." That of which we speak is constantly practised by some humble men in prayer-meeting addresses. It is the simple rhetoric of nature.

(7.) And here let it be asked, What of dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and prayer for his help in preaching? How can a man pray that God will guide him through a forest, when he has already blazed the entire path, and committed himself to follow it? Of course one should seek help in preparing his discourse, and if he reads, should pray that he might be enabled to feel aright in reading. But how much more natural is such prayer, how much more real the dependence upon Divine assistance, how much freer the opening for the Spirit really to help, if the sermon is not already cast in moulds, but the material which has been gathered, is now molten in the mind, and the ultimate process remains to be performed.

(8.) As to the delivery itself, it is only in extemporaneous speaking, of one or another variety, that this can ever be perfectly natural, and achieve the highest effect. The ideal of speaking, it has been justly said, cannot be reached in any other way. Only thus will the voice, the action, the eye, be just what nature dictates, and attain their full power. And while painstaking culture vainly strives to read or recite precisely like speaking, the extemporaneous speaker may with comparative ease, rise to the best delivery of which he is capable. In this way, too, as before remarked, we most readily gain the sympathy of our hearers; they are sympathizing with a man, not a composition, — a man all alive with thoughts he is now thinking, and fervors he is now feeling, and not simply reviving, as far as possible, the thought and feeling of some former time.

(9.) It is also an advantage of this method that it gives facility in speaking without immediate preparation. The preacher who cannot do this upon occasion misses many opportunities of usefulness, and loses influence with the people by an incapacity which they consider a reproach.

(10.) This leads to what is really among the most important advantages of extemporaneous preaching. With the masses of the people, it is the *popular* method. Where principle is involved, one ought to withstand the notions of the people; but when it is a mere question of expediency, — and the present question is nothing more, — then a general and very decided popular preference is an exceedingly important consideration. It does not mend the matter to sneer at the folly of the masses, in so often preferring ignorant preachers who thoroughly sympathize with them, and speak in the way they like. There is real and grave danger that we shall "educate away from the people.' Here, now, is one respect in which educated preachers have it in their power to suit the popular taste, and gain the popular sympathy. If some obstacles to such sympathy can be but partially removed, there need be no difficulty with this obstacle. Those denominations, in particular, whose strength has always been with the masses, ought to make almost everything bend to retain their hold upon the people. No doubt some congregations have been educated into a toleration of reading, but it is almost always an unwilling acquiescence, or a high regard for some man's preaching *in spite of* the fact that he reads. No doubt there are half-educated and fastidious people who greatly prefer reading or recitation. But the thoroughly educated fully agree with the masses as to what is generally the best method. And instead of striving to educate the people into enduring what they will never like, and what can never so deeply move them, let the preacher educate himself into preaching in such a way that he can reach and hold the masses, and leave the fastidious few to think what they please.

2. But we must turn to the *disadvantages* of extemporaneous speaking, some of which require not only careful consideration in argument, but very watchful attention in practice.

(1.) Perhaps the gravest of them all consists in the tendency to neglect of preparation, after one has gained facility in unaided thinking and extemporized expression. Men are prone to abuse all their privileges; but it is a superficial philosophy which thence concludes that privileges should be avoided. And if many extemporizers grow indolent, and rely too much upon the suggestions of the moment, at least they must at the moment have some mental activity; whereas the same indolent men, if accustomed to read or recite, would repeat sermons long ago prepared.

with their minds no longer active, nor their hearts truly warm. This tendency to neglect of preparation is real and powerful, but it may be resisted, and many extemporizers do resist it, continuing through life to prepare their sermons with care; and as just intimated, it is only many readers, and by no means all, that do likewise.

(2.) There is difficulty in fixing the mind upon the work of preparation without writing in full. This may be removed by practice. At the outset, it can be overcome either by making copious notes, or by speaking the subject over in private.

(3.) The extemporizer cannot *quote* so largely as the reader, from Scripture, or from the writings of others. But he is likely to quote only what is really important to the subject, and thus easily remembered. Facility of quotation is not an unmitigated blessing. Those who read often quote long passages which do not increase, which sometimes positively diminish, the interest and impressiveness of the sermon. What fits exactly, we repeat, can be easily remembered. Besides, it is often much better to borrow (with some sort of acknowledgment) the ideas of others, but state them in our own language. People are almost always more interested in this than in extended quotations. Where the quotation of the language itself is really important, and the passage long, one may read it from his Bible, or if from some other source, may write it off and read it, expressly as an important quotation. Perhaps a man who commonly speaks in an easy and familiar manner might carry with him the Pilgrim's Progress, Paradise Lost, or a volume of Spurgeon, and just take it up as the lawyers do, and read an extract. Something like this is frequently done in controversial sermons and public discussions.

(4.) The *style* of an extemporaneous sermon is apt to be less condensed and less finished, than if it were written out and read or recited. But this is not necessarily a fault.

The style may be all the better adapted to speaking, as distinguished from the essay-style. That there is a real and broad difference between these, has been strongly asserted by such masters of effective speaking as Fox and Pitt and Brougham. Copiousness, amplification, even the frequent repetition of a thought under new forms or with other illustrations, are often absolutely necessary in addressing a popular audience, even if it be as cultivated as the House of Commons. Paragraphs of this sort may be preceded or followed by terse, pithy statements, such as those which occur so strikingly in the Epistle of James. Now we learn the writing style by writing, and we must form the speaking style in the process of actual speaking.* In the case of definitions, or other brief passages in which the language becomes especially important, one may fix beforehand, whether with or without writing, the precise terms to be employed. While, however, a condensed and highly finished style is not generally to be sought after in speaking which aims to make any practical impression, there is danger of a wearisome repetition, of "linked *dulness* long drawn out," especially of what some one calls "conclusions which never conclude." This danger can be obviated by care in preparation and in speaking, and by the constant practice of careful writing for other purposes.

(5.) The success of an extemporaneous sermon is largely dependent upon the preacher's feelings at the time of delivery, and upon the circumstances; so that he is liable to decided failure. It is by this, more than anything else, that many men are restrained from attempting to extemporize. And yet this is a condition by which preachers will much oftener gain than lose. A man not capable of failing, can never be eloquent. If he has not so excitable a nature, so sensitive a sympathy with his surroundings, as to be greatly depressed by very unfavorable circumstances, then the most favorable conditions will not greatly exalt and inspire him. In like manner a method of preaching which renders failure impossible, also renders the greatest impressiveness impossible. Preserved from falling below a certain level, the preacher will also be hindered from soaring as high above it as would otherwise be in his power. Nay, let a man commit himself to the occasion and the subject, — let him take heart and strike out boldly, sink or swim.

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* Comp. Part III, chap. 1, §2

(6.) If the sermon is to be used again, and has not been written out in full, it requires some renewed preparation. But this, too, is rather a gain than a loss; for thus the discourse can be more easily and exactly adapted to the new circumstances. A sermon precisely suited to one audience and occasion would usually be, at least in many of its details, quite unsuited to any other; and it is only the extemporaneous speaker that can readily make the requisite changes, which are often slight and delicate, but surpassingly important to the practical result. Besides, while the times change, we are changing in them. A sermon prepared years ago will often need no little modification in order to suit the altered opinions, tastes, and feelings of the preacher himself. And then the necessity for reworking the preparation makes it all fresh to the preacher's mind, and warm again to his heart. So the extemporaneous method does make the repeated use of the same sermon more laborious, but it also serves to make it much more effective.

(7.) Still another, and a serious disadvantage of this method is in its tendency to prevent one's forming the habit of writing. As fluency increases, the contrast between winged, glorious speech, and slow, toilsome writing, becomes to many men too great for their patience, and there grows upon them what some one felicitously calls a *calamophobia* a dread of the pen. And not only does this cut them off from many important means of usefulness, — especially in our day, the era of the printing-press, — but it reacts disastrously upon their power of speaking. *Both the beginner in oratory and the experienced, ready speaker, must constrain themselves to write, much and carefully.* Not, indeed, to write out what they are about to speak, unless they belong to the class who can speak freely after fully written preparation, but to write for other purposes, — essays and exegeses, by way of thoroughly studying a passage or subject, articles for publication, sermons after preaching them, and the like. Thus their habits of writing and of speaking will maintain an equilibrium in their methods of thinking and style of expression, while yet each is practiced according to its own essential and distinctive character.*

Let it now be carefully observed that all the disadvantages of extemporaneous speaking are such as can be completely obviated by resolute and judicious effort, while reading and recitation have many inherent disadvantages, which may, of course, be more or less diminished, but can never be removed. Let this be noticed. The born speaker will be able to overcome the difficulties of extemporaneous speaking, and will find here, and here alone, free play for his powers. We are not referring to the few great orators, but to all who have really a native talent for speaking, including some in whom this long remains undeveloped, through lack of exercise or wrong methods. Some men, not born speakers, but anxious to do good, and zealous pastors, may be able to write and read tolerably instructive and acceptable discourses, while they could never preach extemporaneously. But certainly what is best for them, is not thereby shown to be best in general. Methods of speaking ought to be chosen according to the wants and the powers of those who have some gift as speakers. Very few, if any others, ought to make speaking their business.

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* Comp. on the construction of paragraphs, Part III, chap. 2, 2

§ 4 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE THREE METHODS.

No doubt men spoke in public before writing was invented, as often now among savage tribes; and from the beginning, some of these speeches must have been thought out beforehand, and even their language to some extent fixed. When writing became common, it was natural that sometimes the preparation should be made in writing. We find the great Greek and Roman orators either extemporizing or reciting; and much in their practice that is commonly spoken of as recitation, appears to have been really free speech from written preparation. Lord Brougham, who was a most devoted and appreciative student of Demosthenes, has unhesitatingly asserted that "no Athenian audience could have followed Demosthenes in the condensed form in which his speeches are printed." Burke and Fenelon express themselves to the same effect. If reading speeches was ever practiced among the Greeks and Romans, or reading sermons among the early Christians, it was a rare and exceptional thing. "The sermons," says Neander, speaking of the age of Chrysostom and Augustine, "were sometimes, though rarely, read off entirely from notes, or committed to memory; sometimes they were freely delivered, after a plan prepared beforehand; and sometimes they were altogether extemporary. The last we learn incidentally, from being informed that Augustine was occasionally directed to the choice of a subject by the passage which the 'prælector' had selected for reading; when, he tells us, he was sometimes urged by some impression of the moment, to give his sermon a different turn from what he had originally proposed. We are also informed by Chrysostom, that his subject was frequently suggested to him by something he met with on his way to church, or which suddenly occurred during divine service." *

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* Church Hist. II, 317. He cites no authority for the statement

The practice of reading sermons, as a frequent thing, is generally believed to have originated in the reign of Henry VIII. "Those who were licensed to preach," says Burnet, in his History of the Reformation, "being often accused for their sermons, and complaints being made to the King by hot men on both sides, they came generally to write and read their sermons, and thence the reading of sermons grew into a practice in this church; in which if there was not that heat of fire which the friars had shown in their declamations, so that the passions of the hearers were not so much wrought on by it, yet it has produced the greatest treasure of weighty, grave, and solid sermons that ever the Church of God had; which does in a great measure compensate that seeming flatness to vulgar ears, that is in the delivery of them." * The practice increased in consequence of the civil wars, especially through strong dislike to the impassioned preaching of the Independents. Charles II, not accustomed, on the Continent, to this tamer method, vainly attempted to correct it, as shown by the following curious letter, extracted by Gresley from the statute-book of the University of Cambridge:

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND GENTLEMEN: Whereas his Majesty is informed that the practice of reading sermons is generally taken up by the preachers before the university, and therefore continues even before himself; his Majesty hath commanded me to signify to you his pleasure, that the said practice, which took its beginning from the disorders of the late times, be wholly laid aside, and that the said preachers deliver their sermons, both in Latin and

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that sermons were sometimes *read*, nor does Bingham. Paniel, in his copious History of Preaching (in German), makes no such statement. It is perhaps only an inference from the fact that it was common to preach other men's sermons; yet this would have been done by committing them to memory, or appropriating their trains of thought. Scholars who make a specialty of Church History, might settle the question for us.

* Quoted by Gresley on Preaching, p. 391.

English, by memory, without books; as being a way of preaching which his Majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of foreign churches, to the custom of the university heretofore, and to the nature of that holy exercise: and that his Majesty's command in these premises be duly regarded and observed, his further pleasure is, that the names of all such ecclesiastical persons as shall continue the present supine and slothful way of preaching be, from time to time, signified to him by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, on pain of his Majesty's displeasure.

Oct. 8th, 1674. MONMOUTH.

The effort failed, and reading was frequently practiced in the Church of England. To this day, however, it is quite rare on the Continent, and among Romanists everywhere, and is common only among certain Protestants of England and America. The few Episcopal ministers in this country who extemporize, are surpassingly popular, even among their own brethren, where they manage it effectively. Many leading Presbyterian ministers, and some of their ecclesiastical authorities, have discouraged reading, and even vehemently condemned it.

Most of the eminent examples of reading admit of some explanation. Jonathan Edwards, late in life, regretted the practice, and believed that it was better to preach *memoriter* for the most part, sometimes extemporizing.* Dr. Chalmers, so often adduced, as if the example of a very peculiar man could establish a rule, declared himself unable to extemporize. But look at his style. He was extremely, in fact excessively fond of long sentences, formed of nicely balanced clauses, with the corresponding terms in each clause often indicated by alliteration, and he had an exceeding desire to achieve quaint felicities of phraseology. His images are frequently drawn on a grand and elaborate scale and he was fastidious as to their color and finish. These well-known peculiarities go far to account for his persuasion that he could not extemporize. It would be almost as difficult to improvise a choral ode, as some of those elaborate passages in which he delighted. And after all, Dr. Wayland states,* "A gentleman who was in the habit of hearing him, has assured me that his extempore discourses, delivered to operatives in the outskirts of Glasgow, were far more effective, and more truly eloquent, than the sermons which he delivered with so much applause in the Tron church of that city;" — and there is other testimony to the same effect.

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* Hoppin, p. 71.

§ 5. GENERAL AND SPECIAL PREPARATION FOR EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

The preacher should be careful of his health, not only on other accounts, but because speaking, real speaking, demands a high degree of nervous energy and power of endurance. Many a noble sermon is spoiled by the fact that the preacher begins to flag physically toward the close, and can neither feel high-wrought emotion, nor speak with passion and power.

He should cultivate accuracy and rapidity of thinking, and should discipline himself to pursue trains of thought without interruption, and as far as possible without dependence on outward helps. He must get his knowledge of Scripture, and all his knowledge (as far as may be) at his tongue's end. The habit of keeping one's knowledge fit for service, so that he can at once state what he knows or thinks on subjects he has studied, will preserve from the danger of breaking down, and will enable him to prepare sermons with equal thoroughness in a shorter time.

Great attention ought to be given to the use of language in ordinary writing and conversation. There should be the habit of seeking the most exact terms, and of constructing sentences which shall be grammatical, and yet simple and easy. The most familiar conversation should not degenerate into slang, nor the most dignified into pedantry. There should be no such marked difference as is often seen, between a man's style in public speaking, and in conversation. These should not be different instruments, but simply a higher or lower range on the same instrument. Children are taught that to make sure of being polite when visiting, they must be polite every day at home. So Coquerel says, " In order to speak well sometimes, it is necessary to speak well always." Certainly this is necessary in order that one may feel sure of being able to speak well at any time. And the man who forms such habits need not be uneasy, for his use of language can never be excessively bad.

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* Ministry of the Gospel, p. 126. See also the account of Chalmers' speeches in the General Assembly, in Hanna's Memoir, Vol IV, 114, 199, 438

A young preacher who wishes to extemporize ought to begin it at once. Mr. Zincke's method * may do very well for one who has been reading till middle age, and then sets himself to speak extempore, but it is by no means best for the young. Probably the greatest and most common of blunders about this whole matter lies just here. Authors, professors, pastors, often say to the young minister: "Certainly, extemporaneous preaching is best, if properly practised, and I hope you will learn to extemporize. But do not think of attempting it at first. Begin by reading, — or preaching *memoriter*, — and gradually use yourself to extemporizing." So he begins, forms all his habits of thinking, of constructing discourse, his mastery of expression, style, delivery, everything, to suit the other method, — and a speaker's habits for life are very soon formed, — and after a few years, occasionally attempts to preach in a way for which he has not trained himself, and which is in many respects quite different. Who can wonder that he fails, grows discouraged, and falls back upon the continued practice of the other method, as somehow the best for him? Nay, let a man begin at once what he intends to make the habit of his life.

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* The Duty and the Discipline of Extemporary Preaching, by F. B. Zincke.

Lord Brougham insists that one must first learn to speak easily and fluently, sacrificing everything to this as the prime requisite; and afterwards learn to "convert this kind of easy speaking into chaste eloquence." In saying this, he supposes himself to "differ from all other doctors of rhetoric." And in fact the advice usually given follows the saying of Quintilian: "It is not by writing fast that we come to write well, but by writing well that we learn to write fast." Probably different classes of minds are thought of in the two cases. If a young man finds himself not fluent, but slow and hesitating in speech, then let him follow Brougham's advice, and learn, at all hazards, to speak with ease, though he should at first violate all the rules of rhetoric and even of grammar. But if, as is more commonly the case, he is ready and fluent, then he must rigorously discipline himself to precision of expression. "The old and finished speaker always uses fewer and choicer words, than the young orator."* Command of language does not consist in what Huet disrespectfully called *une fluxe de bouche*, in a mere gush of words, but in the ability to bring forward precisely the right word at the moment it is wanted.

The extemporaneous preacher must carefully *arrange* his sermon, according to the natural order of the thoughts, and then he will have no difficulty in remembering. The sermon must not wander at will over the subject, but have its distinct and well-marked points, and advance steadily from one to another. In both these respects, what helps him will also greatly help the hearer. Whether it has any formal division or not, a popular address should always have points. And it is one advantage of extemporaneous speaking, that it compels to such an arrangement. If now one has stretching before him a well-defined track of thought, divided by natural landmarks into distinct sections, he can diverge from it upon occasion and return without difficulty.*

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* Shedd, p. 238.

If a preacher makes notes in preparing, as it is usually best to do, he ought, in general, not to carry them into the pulpit. Particular subjects or modes of treatment will sometimes make this desirable. But in general, one should take time enough beforehand to get the matter of the sermon in solution in his mind, so that it can flow freely; or, to resume the other figure, to get the track he is to follow so clear to his mental vision, that he can flash a single glance from beginning to end of it. This is not memorizing words, and with a little practice it can be quickly done In other respects, too, great benefit will be derived from this necessity of going thoroughly over the prepared matter shortly before preaching, for thus the mind and heart become kindled, and brought into sympathy with the particular subject to be treated. Sometimes the very words ought to be fixed beforehand. This applies generally to definitions, frequently to transitions, and sometimes to images, such as must be presented with precision and elegance, or they will be worse than nothing. Such preparation of particular sentences may be made in writing and memorized, or may be altogether mental. The advice is often given, to memorize the introduction, and extemporize the language of the remainder of the discourse. This is of questionable propriety. It gives a formal air at the outset, and is apt to make the transition precipitous. Passages of Scripture which are to be quoted, or other proposed quotations, should be gone over in the mind during the immediate preparation, that there may be no blundering or hesitation.

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* "My earnest advice to you is that you never make the attempt to extemporize without being sure of your matter. Of all the defects of utterance I have ever known the most serious is having nothing to utter." Alexander, Thoughts on Preaching, p. 142.

We now see how the inexperienced young preacher may speak extemporaneously without any great danger of utter failure. Let him arrange the discourse with great care, and again and again think through the whole, making no effort to retain the words he lights upon (save as to definitions, etc.), but getting the thoughts, and their succession, perfectly familiar. Speaking it over in his room or in the forest is not wrong, and some find it in their early preparations very useful. Then let him pray for help, and go forward, — he can remember better than he supposes, — and facility will rapidly increase.

In familiar conversation with such a young brother, one might add such hints as the following, with reference to the actual preaching. If you forget what you meant to say next, do not stop. Nothing is so awkward as a dead pause; and the awkwardness increases in geometrical ratio to the seconds of time. Say something, repeat, recapitulate, talk at random even, — anything rather than stop. If you become embarrassed with a tangled sentence, do not turn back, but burst through. If you have made a mistake of grammar, pronunciation, or the like, do not stop to correct it, unless it is serious. An occasional inadvertence is readily pardoned, if the general style be good. And if you greatly blunder in style, forget half your best thoughts, or utterly break down, it will not kill you. Other great men have failed. Remember young Robert Hall.

Public speaking is one of the noblest exercises of the human powers; preaching is its highest form; and if extemporaneous speaking be the best method of preaching, it is surely worth labor to attain excellence in this, — diligent and faithful self-cultivation, resolute determination always to do our best, as long as we live.

CHAPTER II.

ON DELIVERY, AS REGARDS VOICE.

§ 1. General Remarks on Delivery. § 2. The Voice — Its Distinct Powers. § 3. General Improvement of the Voice. § 4. Management of Voice when Actually Speaking — Note on Minister's Sore-Throat.

§ 1. GENERAL REMARKS ON DELIVERY.*

IT can never be necessary to urge the importance of delivery, upon persons who correctly understand its nature, and who appreciate the objects of public speaking.

The famous saying of Demosthenes, repeatedly mentioned by Cicero, is sometimes utterly misrepresented. He did not say that the first thing, second thing, third thing in oratory is *action,* in the English sense of that term, but *delivery,* for this is what the Latin *actio* signifies. And delivery does not consist merely, or even chiefly, in vocalization and gesticulation, but it implies that one is possessed with the subject, that he is completely in sympathy with it and fully alive to its importance; that he is not repeating remembered words, but bringing forth the living offspring of his mind. Even acting is good only in proportion as the actor identifies himself with the person represented — really thinks and really feels what he is saying. In the speaker this ought to be perfect; he is not undertaking to represent another person, to appropriate another's thoughts and feelings, but aims, or should aim, simply to be himself, to utter what his own mind has produced.

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* Of the works mentioned above, Introd. § 7, the most valuable on this subject are those of Cicero and Quintilian, Whately (one-sided, but instructive) and Monod. Since the Introduction was stereotyped, two works on Elocution have appeared. McIlvaine on Elocution, New York, 1870, is by far the best treatise on the subject in existence, containing much thorough discussion of principle and many useful suggestions, with but little that is liable to serious objection. It will be frequently referred to in this and the following chapter. Plumptre's "King's College Lectures on Elocution," London, 1870, is worth examining, though ill-arranged, and often feeble. The two chapters on Action in Dabney's Sacred Rhetoric Richmond, 1870, present a brief, but vigorous and useful discussion

Why then do speakers so often and so sadly fail in respect to this chief element of delivery? Partly because many of the thoughts they present are borrowed, and have never been digested by reflection, and incorporated into the substance of their own thinking. Partly because they so frequently say not what they really feel, but what they think they ought to feel, and are, it may be earnestly, but yet unsuccessfully, trying to feel. And still more because they are uttering the product of a former mental activity, viz. at the time of preparation; and even if the thought and feeling were then perfectly real and genuine, yet the mental states which produced them do now but imperfectly return. In each of these respects it is seen that the speaker is liable to be to some extent an actor; and we can easily understand how a gifted and laborious actor may become much more thoroughly possessed with thought and sentiment which are wholly another's, than a speaker wanting in gifts and labor, with such as are at the moment not wholly his own. Besides, we do not expect of the actor perfect success in this respect, and we wonder and admire that he sometimes so nearly approaches perfection; while of the speaker we naturally do expect perfection, and are offended that he obviously comes short of it.* For a speaker, then, and above all for a preacher, it is a matter of the highest importance that he should resist the tendency to become in part an actor, should strive most earnestly to say nothing but what he now really thinks and now truly feels. It may sometimes be that while a preacher is chagrined at having forgotten a choice expression or a treasured thought, the omission of what his mind's present activity failed to produce may in fact have been a gain, for it would have come in only as a dead thing, detracting from the vitality, and retarding the movement, of the discourse as a whole. At any rate it seems to be clear that a preacher should seek to form mental habits quite different from those of an actor. And while men who wish to be orators are found expecting to profit by taking lessons from actors, it is all the while true that the actor is but attempting to imitate the orator. It is surely better to strike at the heart of the matter, and try to be the real thing one is called to be, than to copy an imperfect copy — better to practice ourselves in saying what we really do think and feel, than to learn from an actor how to say what we do not, almost as if we did.

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* Comp. above, Part III, chap. 4, on the difference between poetry and eloquence.

These views receive confirmation from the strong words of one who has rarely been equalled in his appreciation and his mastery of true art.

> "*Wagner.* I've often heard them boast, a preacher
> Might profit with a player for his teacher.
>
> *Faust.* Yes, when the preacher is a player, granted:
> As often happens in our modern ways.
>
> *Wagner.* Ah! when one with such love of study's haunted,
> And scarcely sees the world on holidays,
> And takes a spy-glass, as it were, to read it,
> How can one by persuasion hope to lead it.
>
> *Faust.* What you don't feel, you'll never catch by hunting
> It must gush out spontaneous from the soul,
> And, with a fresh delight enchanting,
> The hearts of all that hear control

Sit there forever! Thaw your glue-pot,—
Blow up your ash-heap to a flame, and brew
With a dull fire, in your stew-pot,
Of other men's leavings a ragout!
Children and apes will gaze delighted,
If their critiques can pleasure impart;
But never a heart will be ignited,
Comes not the spark from the speaker's heart.

Wagner. Delivery makes the orator's success;
Though I 'm still far behindhand, I confess.

Faust. Seek honest gains, without pretence!
Be not a cymbal-tinkling fool!
Sound understanding and good sense
Speak out with little art or rule;
And when you 've something earnest to utter,
Why hunt for words in such a flutter?
Yes, your discourses, that are so refined,
In which humanity's poor shreds you frizzle,
Are unrefreshing as the mist and wind
That through the withered leaves of autumn whistle." *

A speech, in the strict sense of the term, exists only in the act of speaking. All that precedes is preparation for a speech; all that remains afterwards is report of what was spoken. Whatever may be necessary for convenience in our rhetorical treatises, it is yet exceedingly important not to think of the speech and the delivery as things existing apart. Whatever be our method of preparing, we should habitually regard all as but preparation; it must be cherished and kept alive in the mind, must be vitally a part of itself, and then as living, breathing thought it will be delivered.

And as the preparation is not a speech till it is spoken, so the mere manner of speaking should not at the time receive separate attention. It should be the spontaneous product of the speaker's peculiar constitution, as acted on by the subject which now fills his mind and heart. The idea of becoming eloquent merely by the study of voice and gesture, though sometimes entertained, is essentially absurd. No one would expect to become agreeable in conversation by such means. The Athenians set a far greater value than we do, upon what has been called "the statuary and the music of oratory." They listened to political and judicial speeches with much of the same critical spirit with which we hear a professional musician or a literary lecture. Yet they were very far from giving their chief attention to the mere use of voice and gesture. And even taking delivery in its broadest sense, we find that Demosthenes, as heretofore remarked,* by no means treated delivery as the great thing. He took it for granted that an orator would be careful about materials, arrangement, style, and his orations show that he himself was thus careful in the very highest degree. But delivery, peculiarly important in Athens, had been for him a peculiarly difficult task. Hence his striking, hyperbolical statement — delivery is everything.

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* Goethe's Faust, tr. by Brookes.

The things requisite to effective delivery may be briefly stated as follows:

Have something to say which you are confident is worth saying; scarcely anything will contribute so much as this confidence, to give dignity, directness, ease and power to delivery. Have the treatment well arranged, not after the fashion of an essay, but with the orderly and rapid movement proper to a discourse. Be thoroughly familiar with all that you propose to say, so that you may feel no uneasiness; for the dread of failure sadly interrupts the flow of thought and feeling.† Think it all over within a short time of the hour for speaking, so that you may be sure of the ground, and so that your feelings may be brought into lively sympathy with the subject; it is however best *immediately* before speaking to have the mind free from active thought, maintaining only a quiet, devotional frame. Let the physical condition be as vigorous as possible. In order to this seek good health in general; take abundant sleep the night before speaking; at the meal before speaking eat moderately, of food easily digested, and if you are to speak immediately, eat very little; and do not, if it can possibly be avoided, exhaust your vitality during the day by exciting conversation. A healthy condition of the *nervous* system is surpassingly important; not a morbid excitability such as is produced by studying very late the night before, but a healthy condition, so that feeling may quickly respond to thought, so that there may be sympathetic emotion, and at the same time complete self-control.*

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* See above, Introduction, § 5.

† Comp. McIlvaine on Elocution, p. 120.

Above all, be yourself. Speak out with freedom and earnestness what you think and feel. Better a thousand faults, than through dread of faults to be *tame.* Some of the most useful preachers, men in a true and high sense eloquent, have had grave defects of manner. Habitually correct faults as far as possible, but whether the voice and the action be good or bad, if there is something in you to say, speak it out. And by all means let there be no affectation, or even artificiality.†

> "In man or woman, but far most in man,
> And most of all in man that ministers
> And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe
> All affectation. 'T is my perfect scorn;
> Object of my implacable disgust.
> What! will a man play tricks, will he indulge
> A silly fond conceit of his fair form
> And just proportion, fashionable mien,
> And pretty face, in presence of his God?

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* Comp. McIlvaine, p. 103 ff., 165 ff.; Monod, p. 399 f.

† Comp. above, Introd. § 5.

Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes
As with the diamond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes
When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
His noble office, and, instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock!
Therefore, avaunt all attitude, and stare,
And start theatric, practiced at the glass!"*

§ 2. THE VOICE — ITS DISTINCT POWERS.

The voice is the speaker's great instrument. Nothing else in a man's physical constitution is nearly so important. "For an effective and admirable delivery," says Cicero, "the voice, beyond doubt, holds the highest place." † Not every eminent orator has possessed a commanding person, but every one of great eminence has had an effective voice. The faults which come from natural organization, such as drawling, fineness, feebleness, defective articulation, may often be partially remedied by judicious and patient effort; witness Demosthenes. And a voice extremely faulty in some respects, may yet in other respects have great power, and be precisely suited to the mental character of the man; witness John Randolph. It is said of Burke that "his voice, which he never attempted to discipline, was harsh when he was calm, and when he was excited he often became so hoarse as to be hardly intelligible." This, along with the essay-style of his otherwise magnificent speeches, will account for the fact that he was commonly listened to with weariness; yet on some occasions, when expressing certain varieties of thought and feeling, his delivery was very forcible.‡ Robert Hall had a comparatively weak voice; but he gave it effect by rapidity of utterance, and when he was excited it would swell into power. The vocal gifts of Chrysostom, Whitfield, Spurgeon, are well known. From all this it appears that while one cannot be an orator of the highest class without unusual powers of voice, he may yet be a highly effective speaker notwithstanding grave defects; so that every one should be encouraged to make the best of such vocal powers as he possesses.

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* Cowper. † De Or. III, 60.

‡ See Bulwer on Style in Caxtoniana.

A minute acquaintance with the anatomy and physiology of the organs of speech is not necessary to the orator. Even a general knowledge of them is more useful in the way of avoiding disease than of positively improving delivery.*

But there are certain powers of voice which, with reference to public speaking, it is important to distinguish.

(1.) Compass, the range of pitch over which the voice extends. The difference between voices in this respect is very obvious in the case of singers, but it is not less real in speaking, and is a matter of great consequence in expressing the immense variety of sentiments which a speaker will feel, even in the progress of the same discourse.

(2.) Volume, the quantity of sound produced, is entirely distinct from pitch, though frequently confounded with it in the popular use of such terms as loud and strong. Ample volume, properly regulated, will render the voice audible to a greater distance, and will make it more commanding.

(3.) Penetrating power. The distance to which one can be heard, does not depend simply on volume and pitch, nor on distinct articulation; there is a difference between voices as to their power of penetration. A similar difference exists in the case of many other sounds, natural and artificial. The philosophy of it has not been satisfactorily explained, and the fact is scarcely noticed in treatises on elocution, but a very little observation will convince one that the difference is real. Indeed, penetrating power is sometimes clearly hereditary,* which proves that it is a natural property of voice.

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* A good and sufficient account of these organs is given by McIlvaine, p. 183–98.

(4.) Melody. This depends on both sweetness and flexibility of voice. The single sounds must be sweet, and the constant transitions in pitch, required by variations of sentiment, must be made with promptness, precision and smoothness. A voice is not melodious if in either respect deficient.

§ 3. GENERAL IMPROVEMENT OF VOICE.

Cicero tells us that Caius Gracchus, when speaking, kept a servant near him and out of sight, having a flute, the note of which would now and then bring up the orator's voice when flagging, or recall it when overstrained; and he judiciously adds that it were better to leave the flute-player at home, and carry to the forum the habit acquired.† This holds good as to all vocal improvement, in fact as to all that pertains to delivery. We must seek by general exercise and care to form such *habits*, of speech and of bearing, that there may be little need to give them attention when actually engaged in public speaking.

Whatever improves the general *health* will improve the voice, especially *muscular exercise*, and particularly such as develops the chest, and promotes an easy erectness of position. *Singing* cultivates the voice in almost every respect, and probably to a greater extent than anything else except actual speaking. It is on many other accounts also very desirable that a minister should be able to sing, and to sing by note; and young ministers, and those preparing for the ministry, should take much pains to learn to sing. If it should require as much time and effort to gain the power of singing church music at sight as to learn a modern language or a branch of science, it would be fully as profitable, and almost any man who is still young can learn to sing moderately well, by judicious and persevering effort. *Reading* aloud is also of good service in cultivating the voice. It is, however, more laborious than speaking, and should be promptly suspended when it becomes decidedly fatiguing. A proper management of the voice in all ordinary *conversation,* is a matter of the very highest importance. As in politeness, and as in style, so in the use of the voice (and also in action), it is impossible for one to do really well on special occasions who is habitually careless and slovenly. We have already urged this as regards style, and extemporaneous preaching, but it deserves to be repeated and reiterated. Take care that your utterance in conversation shall always be audible, agreeable, and at the same time easy and natural; and then in public speaking your utterance will almost take care of itself. *Vocal exercises* may be quite useful for certain purposes and to some extent. If excessive, or of an improper character, they may seriously injure the organs; and there is still greater danger that they will produce artificiality. When conducted in private, under the direction of a really judicious teacher of elocution, they might be of great service in correcting special faults; but teachers of elocution, the most intelligent, appear singularly prone to attempt too much, to be dissatisfied with the humble task of correcting faults, and undertake to superinduce some positive, and of necessity artificial excellence. After all, *practice* in actual speaking is, next to care in conversation, the main thing. But it must be heedful practice, with observation of the faults developed, and effort afterwards to avoid them, or it will but confirm and render incurable one's natural or accidental defects. Some one has said: "Practice makes perfect; and bad practice makes perfectly bad."

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* The author is familiar with a manifest instance.

† De Or. III, 60 f.

Care must constantly be taken not to destroy individuality of voice. A man's voice is a part of himself, a part of his power; he must keep it essentially unaltered, while improved as far as possible.

A few points may be noticed, as to the means of improving particular powers of voice.

(1.) Compass will be improved by nothing so much as by singing. Something may be gained by taking a short sentence, and repeating it (in the open air) on a key successively elevated or lowered, to the full limit of our range of voice; taking care that the utterance shall at every pitch be speaking, and not become half singing. In such exercises it is necessary to remember that on a low key it is best to speak slowly, and swiftly on a high key. The difference is clearly seen in comparing the lower and upper tones of a piano or violin, and the human voice is also a stringed instrument. In actual speaking, nature at once prompts the swifter or slower utterance, if only we let nature have liberty.

(2.) As to volume, we gain mainly by such habitual carriage and such physical exercise as may expand and strengthen the lungs. Riding horseback, cutting wood, and in a remarkable degree certain gymnastical exercises, will have this effect, as soon appears from increased breadth of chest. Taking a series of long breaths, every morning before breakfast, or at any time of day when the stomach is not full, will act upon the lungs, and if regularly practised, accomplish much more than might be supposed. The habit of talking with the mouth well opened, so as to give full and free utterance (of course without mouthing), is here quite important. Occasional loud singing (not on a high pitch) will be of service, and actual speaking, unless very badly managed, will steadily augment the volume of one's voice, through all his earlier years.

(3.) Penetrating power may be increased by giving the matter distinct attention, in vocal exercises, and sometimes in speaking. The effort should be to project the voice, to make it reach farther, without elevating the pitch or increasing the quantity of sound. By calling to a friend on an opposite hill, or by fixing the eye on a distant person in a large audience and endeavoring to make him hear, we naturally develop this power; but great care must be taken not to substitute an alteration of pitch or tone. It is found by physical experiments of different kinds, that *pure* tones, those not mixed with irregular noises, tones full, clear, steady,* are heard at a greater distance than others; and this is even a more important reason for cultivating purity of tone than its effect in the way of melody.

Purity of tone applies chiefly to the utterance of vowel sounds. But penetrating power of voice is also greatly *assisted* by the distinct articulation of consonants. Nothing is more common than in approaching a speaker to hear sound, even loud sound, before we hear words. This is chiefly due to the fact that the speaker swells his vowel sounds, but does not bring out the consonants. Yet it is mainly these that determine the word, in speech as well as in stenography.

Now as to distinctness of articulation, great faults are very common. and there is ample room for cultivation, by simple means. In conversation, reading, speaking, especially in singing, (because there it is most difficult,) let pains be constantly taken to articulate every letter according to its true sound, and particularly every consonant. Special exercises may be used, containing consonants often neglected, such as the strong *r* and the nasal sound of *ing*, or difficult combinations of two or three consonants, as shrink, expects, fifth and sixth verses. It is on various accounts important that preachers should learn to utter with ease the forms of the second person singular of verbs, such as wouldst, blessedst, etc., which constantly occur in prayer, and sometimes in exhortation. Where a consonant, or combination of consonants, ends one word and begins the next, there is often special difficulty. E. g. "take care," "sit down." Not one in five of educated ministers will correctly articulate the words, "In the evening it is *cut down* and withereth." An excellent example is the saying, "It is the first step that costs." *

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* Comp. McIlvaine, p. 296

Distinctness of articulation is everywhere much neglected by the masses of men; it is especially so in this country, and particularly at the South. American English is feebler in sound than the language in England; and at the South there is already to some extent seen the general tendency of people living in a warm climate, to prolong and make musical the vowel sounds, but to drop, alter, or slur over the strong combinations of consonants. This is a grave fault in public speaking. Italian is admirable for music, but for oratory, genuine English is far better. At the same time, let us beware of extremes. The rolling English *r*, for instance, is contrary to the established usage of America, and should not be imitated. And in general, we must not show an *effort* at distinctness; even mumbling is hardly so bad as this. A man need not speak — a German writer suggests — like one who is teaching the deaf and dumb to talk. When one who grew up with careless habits as to articulation first attempts to correct them, he will for a while betray the effort; but this can be soon overcome, by practicing exercises in private, and especially by care in conversation.

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* Useful collections of examples for this purpose may be found in the highest School Readers, and in some works on elocution. McIlvaine has good remarks on articulation, p. 218–26, and a long and instructive chapter on pronunciation, p. 239–93.

He who wishes to be heard at a great distance, must speak rather slowly. There is thus a clear interval between the sound-waves, and even when they have come a long way and are growing faint, they will still be distinct.

This penetrating power of voice, with the distinct articulation which aids it, is believed to deserve the special attention of all public speakers.

(4.) As regards *melody*, we have seen that it depends on sweetness and flexibility of voice. The former is chiefly a natural quality, but it may be improved by singing; also in conversation by attention to purity of tone, avoiding huskiness, and all mingling of mere noise with the vocal utterance; and in general, by keeping the organs of speech in a healthy condition. The vowel sounds are here most important, the prolongation of these making the sweet tones. The consonants, while distinctly articulated for other purposes, must in order to melody be uttered with smoothness and ease. There is a marked tendency in this country, particularly at the North, to omit or disguise many unaccented vowel sounds, thereby greatly impairing the melody of the words, and sometimes making them indistinct. Take, for example, the shortened utterance we so often hear, of *absolute, tolerable, immensity.** This tendency ought to be studiously avoided by all who desire to speak agreeably, and should be resisted and corrected by all who wish well to our language. But not a few preachers go to the opposite extreme, and exhibit an affected precision. Thus in *difficult* the vowel of the second syllable should have its proper sound (though vulgarly sounded like short *u*), but in *audible, sensible,* this would be an affectation, for the disguised sound is established by the best usage.

Flexibility is necessary for the exact expression of varying sentiment, as well as for melody. It will improve by practice, if one speaks with earnest feeling, and it may be cultivated by any exercises involving quick transitions from one pitch to a much higher or lower one. "Probably the best exercise is that of reading aloud . . . . dialogues, in which the reader represents alternately a number of interlocutors. The animation which is characteristic of this species of discourse, and the frequent and rapid changes of the voice which are requisite to maintain the distinction of persons and characters, afford the most effective aids to the development of this power. Humorous selections also are good for this purpose." *

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* Comp. Dabney's Sac. Rhet. p. 305.

Melody is exceedingly desirable, but without possessing it in a high degree a speaker's voice may be, on other accounts, very effective. And it is a grave fault to *play tunes* on the voice, to give a sort of musical accompaniment, distinct from the sentiments uttered, as appears to be quite common in England, and is sometimes seen in America, in the pulpit-tone of even educated men.

§ 4. MANAGEMENT OF VOICE WHEN ACTUALLY PREACHING.

A few simple hints may be profitably borne in mind.

(1.) Do not begin on too high a key. One is particularly apt to do this in the open air, or in a large and unfamiliar church, or when much excited. It is wonderful how difficult a speaker finds it to lower the main key on which he has once fairly started. He may become aware of it in three minutes, and make repeated efforts to correct the mistake, but in most cases he will fail; and when impassioned passages come, in which the voice must rise, it will rise to a scream. Every one has often witnessed this process. It is of course not impossible to change the key, and this should be carefully attempted when necessary. But the great matter is to avoid beginning wrong. Tenor voices, it is obvious, are especially apt to begin too high. If one becomes impassioned in the early part of the discourse, he ought not then to let out his voice in its full force, but reserve its highest power for some later and culminating point, as is done with the more powerful instruments in an oratorio.* In fact, the voice should very rarely go to its highest pitch, or to its fullest volume; there ought always to be a reserve force, unless it be in some moment of the most exalted passion. Long passages of bawling, relieved only by occasional bursts into a harrowing scream, are in every sense hurtful to all concerned.

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* McIlvaine, p. 320. His chapters on the qualities and powers of the voice, and their improvement, p. 294–320, contain a good deal that is useful.

It was speaking long on a high key in the open air, with unrestrained passion, that led many of the early Baptist preachers of this country into that sing-song, or "holy whine," which is still heard in some parts of the country. The voice, strained and fatigued, instinctively sought relief in a rhythmical rise and fall, as is also the case in the loud cries of street peddlers. They were commonly zealous, and sometimes great men who fell into this fault, and it was often imitated by those who came after them, after the usual superficial fashion of imitators, mistaking the obvious fault for the hidden power. To some of the ignorant people, this peculiar whine is connected by a life-long association with the most impressive truths and the most solemn occasions; and so it touches their feelings, independently of what is said, and sometimes when the preacher's words are not heard—like the revival tunes, or those familiar to us from childhood.

We must not begin on a high key, and yet the text should be distinctly heard. The difficulty thus arising when the audience is large, may be overcome by stating the text slowly, distinctly, and if necessary, a second time and by projecting the voice, instead of elevating it.

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*Palmer, Homiletik, s. 538

(2.) Do not suffer the voice to *drop* in the last words of a sentence. Though it must often sink, returning to the general pitch of the discourse, yet it must not fall too suddenly, nor too low. It is not uncommon for the last words to be quite inaudible.

(3.) Never fail to take breath before the lungs are entirely exhausted; and usually keep them well filled. This will generally be done without effort in extemporaneous speaking; but in recitation and reading it requires special attention. Monod says: "For this purpose, it is necessary to breathe quite often, and to take advantage of little rests in the delivery." * A speaker must not gasp in his breath through the mouth, but breathe through the nostrils, regularly and steadily. He must keep the head and neck in an upright posture, for the sake of breathing freely, as well as for other reasons; and there must be nothing tight around his throat.

(4.) Look frequently at the remotest hearers, and see to it that they hear you. If particular persons anywhere in the room have grown inattentive, they may often be aroused by quietly *aiming* the voice at them for a moment.

(5.) Let there be variety; of pitch, of force, and of speed.† Monotony is utterly destructive of eloquence. But variety of utterance must be gained, not by assuming it from without, but by taking care to have a real and marked variety of sentiment, and then simply uttering each particular sentiment in the most natural manner. ‡

For the rest, let rules alone, and think not about your voice, but your subject, and those on whom you wish to impress it. Except that when some marked fault has attracted attention, or been pointed out by a friend, care must be taken to avoid it hereafter.

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* On the Delivery of Sermons, p. 402.

† See McIlvaine, on Time and Pause, p. 346 ff.

‡ *Emphasis* requires much attention in reading, and will be discussed below in Part V. In speaking, a correct emphasis will be spontaneous, whenever one is fully in sympathy with his subject.

NOTE ON MINISTER'S SORE-THROAT.

There is a peculiar disease, produced by excessive or ill-managed use of the organs of speech, which occurs so much oftener with preachers than with other public speakers or with singers, that it is commonly called clergyman's or minister's sore-throat. It is by no means confined to them, being found in lawyers, professors, public singers, and private persons. A statement of the principal causes which produce the disease will perhaps explain why it is more common with ministers.

It is desirable first to explain briefly the nature of this disease. The windpipe, upon leaving the throat, divides into two branches, one for each lung, and each of these branches subdivides into several small tubes, called bronchial tubes. A disease which consumes the substance of the lung itself is called consumption ; an inflammation of the lining membrane of the bronchial tubes is called bronchitis. The disease we are at present considering is laryngitis, an inflammation of the larynx, just at the upper end of the windpipe, where it opens into the mouth. The ulcers it often forms can be seen by another person with the unaided eye, by pressing down the tongue with a spoon. It is obviously a far less serious disease than bronchitis, and is perhaps never fatal, except when it passes into bronchitis.

The causes of this laryngitis are apparently several, (1.) Feeble health in general, especially of the alimentary system. This is apt to take effect upon that part of the body which is most severely exercised; as in a silversmith, upon the eyes, in a speaker, upon the throat, &c. Now ministers are particularly subject to feebleness in the alimentary organs, because their life is anxious and apt to be too sedentary, and because they are often tempted to eat too freely. (2.) Speaking much when under the influence of *depressing* emotions. These naturally cause the throat to contract,* and render speaking more fatiguing; whereas exciting emotions, such as anger or joy, will expand the throat. It is obvious that ministers are peculiarly exposed to such depressing feelings while they speak (3.) Speaking when hoarse. Preachers, having fixed and very frequent occasions for speaking, are more likely than even lawyers to think themselves bound to speak when hoarse. (4.) Singing, when the organs are fatigued. Those who suffer from laryngitis usually find singing much more injurious than speaking, and this shows it to be particularly trying to the larynx. Now ministers very often sing when greatly fatigued by a long and impassioned sermon — and there is no corresponding experience in the case of others. (5.) Speaking from an elevated stand, looking down upon the hearers, causes a bending and contraction of the vocal tube just at the point where this disease arises. High pulpits are not now universal, as they once were, but are still unhappily common, though for other reasons also objectionable. Besides, in some parts of the country it is usual for one who is *praying*, to stand with upturned face, which throwing the head back, produces a like constriction of the larynx; and various cases of laryngitis are said to have been promptly relieved by ceasing to adopt this very unnecessary posture. (6.) Reading is much more injurious to these organs than speaking. This also is conclusively shown by the experience of persons suffering from laryngitis, and the reasons for it can be easily perceived. The fact is noticed by a clergyman of the Church of England: "The song-note and speech-note are essentially different, yet each may be produced in their respective work of singing and speaking for several hours daily without injury to the throat. It is only the speech-note as produced for reading, that induces this condition." * Public reading instead of speaking is, it is well known, very rarely practiced by any other persons than ministers.

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* Compare the etymology of the word *anxious*.

It thus appears that several causes conspire to render preachers more liable to this disease than others, but that most of the causes can be removed, or counteracted. The symptom which especially demands care, is a feeling of great fatigue and feebleness in the organs, so that speaking, while not yet painful, seems burdensome and laborious. At any time, and particularly when the general health is feeble, this symptom imperatively calls for rest. One should for a while refrain from preaching, as far as practicable, and from singing, and protracted and excited conversation; and should carefully avoid taking cold, for this will almost certainly produce ulcers. It is highly injurious in such a case to stimulate the jaded organs by means of ginger, pepper, etc., in order to strain them a little longer. Let it be observed that an ordinary hoarseness, or sore-throat, without the tired and enfeebled feeling just mentioned, is not to be confounded with the disease in question.

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* Cull, Lecture on Reading Aloud, quoted in Plumptre on Elocution, p. 199.

If laryngitis has actually occurred, it is certainly a serious calamity, but by no means hopeless. The disease is often cured, wholly or in great part, and men who continue subject to it, are not unfrequently able, by proper care, to do much preaching. The chief remedies are temporary rest and especially improvement of the general health. Horseback exercise, travel, or some active and enlivening employment, with increased attention to the ordinary conditions of health, will often work a cure in a few weeks. If ulcers are formed, and the physician proposes cauterizing, let it be done without hesitation; the dread of it commonly felt is without cause. After a few weeks of rest, if there has been partial though not entire recovery, and especially if the general health has improved, it is best to resume preaching to some extent. To find oneself able to do this, even with some difficulty, will promote cheerfulness. And moderate exercise of the organs of speech is beneficial to them, precisely as with other organs. Even consumptives frequently derive unquestionable benefit from singing or speaking.

It is very apt to injure even a healthy voice, if it be much strained in very cold or very hot air. When one has grown quite warm in preaching, and goes out into cold air, it is extremely important to guard against taking cold, not so much by wrapping the throat as by protecting the whole body. Neglect of this often produces worse diseases than laryngitis.

CHAPTER III.

ON DELIVERY, AS REGARDS ACTION.*

THE term action is now commonly restricted to what Cicero calls the *sermo corporis*, or speech of the body, including expression of countenance, posture and gesture, but not including the use of the voice.

The freedom and variety of action exhibited by children when talking to each other, shows that it is perfectly natural. Its wonderful expressiveness, even apart from language, is sometimes displayed by the deaf and dumb, and by others skilled in pantomime. There is a familiar story of a dispute between Cicero and Roscius, an actor famous for pantomime, as to which could express a thought more eloquently, the one by words, or the other by signs. In many cases a gesture is much more expressive than any number of words. "How truly language must be regarded as a hindrance to thought, though the necessary instrument of it, we shall clearly perceive on remembering the comparative force with which simple ideas are communicated by signs. To say, 'Leave the room,' is less expressive than to point to the door. Placing a finger on the lips is more forcible than whispering, 'Do not speak.' A beck of the hand is better than 'Come here.' No phrase can convey the idea of surprise so vividly as opening the eyes and raising the eyebrows. A shrug of the shoulders would lose much by translation into words."* "He who is master of this sign-language has, indeed, an almost magic power. When the orator can combine it with the spoken language, he acquires thereby exceeding vivacity of expression. Not only his mouth, but his eyes, his features, his fingers, speak. The hearers read the coming sentiment upon his countenance and limbs almost before his voice reaches their ears: they are both spectators and listeners; every sense is absorbed in charmed attention."†

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* On this subject profitable use has been made of the notes of lectures by the author's esteemed colleague, Rev. B. Manly, Jr., D. D. Among the treatises, Russell is here best, Pulpit Elocution, p. 346–68.

How happens it that the man has so often lost this wonderful power, which the child possessed? In some cases he has been hardened, even in early manhood, by the too fierce struggle of life, and has lost the fresh and lively feeling of childhood. In most cases he has become constrained and self-conscious, no longer forgetting himself, as the child did, in the subject he speaks of, and whether he be timid or vain, his manner is of necessity unnatural and awkward. Action is true only when it is spontaneous, and for the moment almost unconscious. Even the child becomes constrained as soon as it is aware of being observed; and on the other hand, the shyest or most conceited man, if his whole soul be absorbed in his subject, and himself for the time forgotten, again grows free and expressive in action,—so far, at least, as bad habits will now permit. And besides all this, there has sometimes been the influence of wrong notions about action, learned from unwise teachers or from casual talk.

How then shall the preacher, in this respect also, "be as the little children?" He must cultivate his religious sensibilities, and a realizing faith. He must prayerfully seek to care more for his sacred themes, and less for himself—to keep the thought of self habitually and thoroughly subordinate to the thought of saving souls, and glorifying the Redeemer. He must remember that he himself, as the Creator made him, is called to preach the gospel; and that with his individuality unimpaired, while faculties are developed and faults corrected, he is to do the work to him appointed. Then, thoroughly possessed with his subject, lifted above the fear of man, and kindled into zeal for usefulness, let him speak out what he thinks and feels. No doubt he will make some blunders; but what of that? A child can never learn to walk, without sometimes falling. But the child will not keep on falling the same way; and so the speaker's blunders may teach him something. Though probably not aware of them at the time, because too busy with higher things, he may recall afterwards his faults of action, or may be told of them by some kindly, or perhaps some unkind critic, — and next time he will notice a little, and correct or avoid.

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* Herbert Spencer on Style, p. 11. Quintilian (XI, 3) compares also the impression made on us by pictures.

† Dabney's Sac Rhet. p. 323.

Some men have naturally much more action than others. And so with races, and men of the same race in different regions. The more excitable nations, as the French, gesticulate almost constantly; the English comparatively little. On this subject English writers should not be heeded by us;* for Americans are naturally more ardent and excitable, more inclined to free and varied gesture, than the English. And the same man will have more or less action, according to his physical condition and the mood he is in, as well as according to the subject and the circumstances. Trust, then, to spontaneous impulse. Do not repress nature, save where particular faults present themselves. And never force nature; for action is not indispensable, while unnatural action would be injurious. Robert Hall had usually not much gesture, though his expression of countenance was remarkable. Spurgeon has nothing very striking in his action, but an extraordinary voice. On the other hand, "there is an oaken desk shown at Eisenach, which Luther broke with his fist in preaching;" * and the Apostle Paul appears to have had a peculiar and impressive manner of stretching forth his hand. Do, then, what is natural with you, and at the time. Have much or little action, of this sort or of that. And always remember that you are not engaged in a tournament, but in a battle — that your great concern is not to keep within rules, but to conquer.

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* E. g. Whately, p. 443, says: "Action is hardly to be reckoned as any part of the orator's art."

It has been remarked above that action, the "speech of the body," includes several distinct things.

1. Expression of countenance has great power. "But especially dominant is the countenance. With this we supplicate, threaten, or soothe, with this we are sad or joyous, elated or dejected; on this the people hang, this they look at and study, even before we speak . . . . this is often superior to all words." † With the exception, however, of one feature, expression of countenance is almost involuntary, and little can be done in the way of improvement beyond the correction of faults. When a man is possessed with his subject, and thoroughly subordinates all thought of self, his countenance will spontaneously assume every appropriate expression.

But the exception is notable. Cicero says: "In delivery, next to the voice in effectiveness is the countenance; and this is ruled over by the eyes." ‡ "The expressive power of the human eye is so great that it determines, in a manner, the expression of the whole countenance. It is almost impossible to disguise it. It is said that gamblers rely more upon the study of the eye, to discover the state of their opponents' game, than upon any other means. Even animals are susceptible of its power. The dog watches the eyes of his master, and discovers from them, before a word

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* Hoppin, p. 253. † Quint. XI, 3, 72. ‡ De Or. III, 59.

is spoken, whether he is to expect a caress, or apprehend chastisement. It is said that the lion cannot attack a man so long as the man looks him steadily in the eyes. . . . . All the passions and emotions of the human heart, in all their degrees and interworkings with each other, express themselves, with the utmost fulness and power, in the eyes."* Now the eyes we can in some respects control. We cannot by a volition make them blaze, or glisten, or melt; but we can always *look at* the hearers. And the importance of this it would be difficult to overstate. Besides the direct power which the speaker's eye has over the audience, penetrating their very soul with its glance, it is by looking that he catches their expression of countenance, and enters into living sympathy with them. We have before remarked upon the sustaining and stimulating power of sympathy in the audience.† He who does not feel helped by this, and does not greatly miss it when wanting, was not born to be a public speaker, or has strangely perverted his nature by wrong notions and bad methods. And in addition to the involuntary effect upon the speaker of seeing the countenances of his hearers, he can watch the effect produced, and purposely adapt his thoughts, style and manner to their condition at the moment.

If a man feels as he should, his look at the outset will be respectful without timidity, independent without defiance or conceit, and solemn without sanctimoniousness, and then will spontaneously change its character with every variation of feeling.

2. Posture. In walking, standing, sitting, riding, one should take pains to acquire habitual uprightness and ease

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* McIlvaine, p. 400.

† Introd. § 1. Comp. also Part IV, chap. 1, upon the great advantage which an extemporaneous speaker has in the freedom of the eye. McIlvaine, p. 103 ff., states very strongly the value of sympathy in public speaking.

and then in public speaking there will be little danger of his assuming any other than an appropriate posture. But there are various faults which, through lack of such habits, or from mistaken views of oratory or wrong feelings at the time of speaking, many persons exhibit. Quintilian and later writers give warning as to these, and some of them ought to be mentioned.

Among the commonest faults of preachers is leaning on the pulpit. All inexperienced speakers are apt, feeling ill at ease, to have a tottering equilibrium, and to look for something with which they may prop themselves. The pulpit is so convenient for this purpose, that we need not wonder if a habit of leaning on it is often formed. When a young preacher finds himself inclined to this, he should not only resist the tendency while in the pulpit, but should take pains in social meetings, Sunday-school speaking, etc., to stand out with nothing before him. A few early experiences will rapidly form a habit, good or bad.

The body should be simply erect. A slight inclination of the head at the opening is with most men a natural expression of deference for the audience, but it must be very slight, and will disappear as the preacher grows more animated. An habitual stoop is a grave fault, both because unsightly, and because hurtful to the organs of speech, and should be corrected if possible; with a few men it is natural and invincible. To "rear back," as some do, suggests, though it be unjustly, the idea of arrogance or conceit.

The arms should hang quietly by the side. To fold them on the breast is a gesture expressive of peculiar sentiments and to be rarely used. To place the hands on the hips, if with the fingers forward, seems to indicate a sort of pert defiance; if with the fingers backward, it suggests weakness in the back. To clasp the hands over the abdomen is offensive, and to clasp the hands behind the back though not offensive, is scarcely graceful, particularly if they are placed under the coat-skirts. To put them in the coat pockets is inelegant, and in the breeches pocket is vulgar. To stand, as many do, with one hand in the bosom, or to occupy one hand in playing with a watch key or guard, or with coat-buttons, etc., (Andrew Fuller's practice,) is in a greater or less degree undesirable. It is natural that the arms should at first hang easily by the side, (with the palm towards the body,) until there is occasion to move one or both in gesticulation, and that after any gesture they should tend back to the same position, though in many cases they remain for a while in some intermediate position of comparative repose.

The feet should neither be far apart, like a sailor, nor in immediate contact. Their precise position will be determined by the man's form and habits, and rules laying down one particular posture should be rejected. The Roman orator commonly stood with the left foot forward, because he bore up the toga on his left arm, and the ancient soldier advanced the left foot, because his left arm carried the shield. No similar causes now exist for regularly advancing the left foot.* The only ground of choice would seem to be, that if one hand is at any time actively used in gesticulating, it seems natural and easier to have the corresponding foot thrown somewhat forward. How often a speaker is to *change* posture will depend on his temperament and his excitement at the time; one need scarcely give himself any concern on that point, unless he happens to be inclined to a restless, fidgety movement, which is of course to be avoided. We must beware of "striking an attitude," like Corporal Trim, and many an other would-be orator.

He who finds himself inclined to any of these faults, ought resolutely to correct them, carefully to guard against them.

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* Russell's Pulpit Elocution, p. 357.

The only real difficulty about correcting such comparatively trifling faults is that men will not think them worth the trouble. But nothing that at all affects a preacher's usefulness is really trifling. The young need have but little trouble in curing these bad habits; and for those of middle age it is still entirely possible. Resolute determination, with perseverance, and especially care to form counter habits when out of the pulpit, will commonly triumph. If such defects really cannot be remedied, one must try not to be worried about them, but to do his best notwithstanding.

3. Gesture — when we have excluded posture — denotes movement, whether of the whole person, the feet, the body, the head, or the hands. It is not natural for a speaker, if at all animated, to stand perfectly still, and it is important not to fidget about, nor to walk the platform like a tiger in his cage. Between these extremes, a man will change place more or less freely according to temperament, circumstances, and taste. To stamp with the foot, may sometimes naturally express indignation or certain other vehement feelings, but it is apt to suggest an impotent rage; and at any rate it is scarcely ever becoming in a preacher. Movements of the body, such as rocking to and fro, or swaying from side to side, are almost always to be avoided, and bending far forward is very rarely proper. The head has a variety of appropriate and expressive movements, but one must beware of awkwardness, extreme vehemence, and monotony.

The arms and hands have to be considered together because in public speaking there can be scarcely any gesture with the hand that is not naturally accompanied by some movement of the arm. Thus either may be taken as representing both. The Greeks comprehended the whole art of elocution under the term *chironomy*, or management of the hands.* Certainly the hands and arms are in ges ture of unequalled importance. Quintilian says: "As to the hands, without which delivery would be mutilated and feeble, it can scarcely be said how many movements they have, when they almost equal the number of words. For other parts of the person help the speaker, these, I might almost say, speak themselves." * But many speakers are greatly at a loss what to do with their hands,† and a similar difficulty is often betrayed in the parlor and on the street. Gresley here points out an advantage of reading sermons: "The extemporaneous preacher .... must find employment for his hands. But when you have your sermon written before you, your hands are occasionally used in turning over the leaves of the manuscript," ‡ and so the reader, fortunate man, is not compelled to gesticulate.

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* Russell, p. 360.

It would be tedious to catalogue the faults which may be observed in gesture with the hand and arm. Among the commonest are a fluttering of the hands, which with some persons becomes a marked habit; a shoving motion, which is appropriate to express abhorrence, or any repulsion, but not otherwise; and a sort of boxing movement. Some work the arm up and down, like a pump handle, and others flap the fore-arm only, like a penguin's wings, instead of moving the arm from the shoulder, with the free action which public speaking naturally prompts. Angular movements are appropriate to certain sentiments, but as habitual, are very awkward. The palm of the hand, as its most expressive part, should in general be turned towards the audience, and somewhat expanded. "Yet how often we see the hand of the speaker held out flat and close, like a piece of board, or edgewise, like a chopping knife, or feebly hollowed, like that of a beggar, receiving alms. Sometimes, on the contrary, we see it clinched in a style which calls up the associations of smiting with the fist of wicked

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* Quint. XI, 3, 85.

† Comp. above, as to posture.

‡ Gresley on Preaching, p. 282.

ness." * The clenched hand, the pointed fore-finger, etc., are very effective when their peculiar meaning is wanted, and otherwise are proportionally inappropriate and damaging. It is also a common fault to bring down the hand with a slap on the thigh, a movement necessarily ungraceful, or to slap the hands frequently together, which is very rarely appropriate; and some preachers have quite a trick of banging the Bible.

In all the employments and circumstances of life, let the speaker see to it that his bearing shall be free, unconstrained, and not ungraceful. Then in speaking he will have little occasion to think of posture or gesture, and may follow, without fear, the promptings of nature. In general, one should never repress a movement to which he is inclined, because afraid it may not be graceful. After all, life and power are far more important than grace; and, in fact, timid self-repression destroys grace itself. On the other hand, *never make any gesture from calculation.* It must be the spontaneous product of present feeling, or it is unnatural, and has but a galvanized life. He who declaims or even thinks over his address beforehand, and arranges that here or there he will make such or such a gesture, will inevitably mar his delivery at that point by a fault, were he Edward Everett himself. It is inexpressibly foolish, though actually done by some teachers of elocution, to be determining how many sentences may be uttered before the first gesture. It is utterly unwise to begin gesticulating at any point from the notion that it is now time to begin. The time to begin is when one feels like beginning, neither sooner nor later. A sermon or other speech ought usually to open quietly, and therefore there will usually be no gestures just at the outset.

A few simple rules may be added, with regard to action of every kind.

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* Russell, p. 360

(1.) Action should be suggestive rather than imitative Closely imitative gestures, except in the case of certain dignified actions, are unsuitable to grave discourse, and belong rather to comedy. In saying, "he stabbed him to the heart," one will make some vehement movement of the hand, suggestive of the mortal blow; a movement imitating it, would be ridiculous, comic. A really good man, in preaching at a University, once said: "You shut your eyes to the beauty of piety: you stop your ears to the calls of the gospel: you turn your back," etc., and in saying it, shut his eyes, stopped his ears with his fingers, and whirled his broad back into view. Alas! for the good done to the students by his well-meant sermon. In "suiting the action to the word," he "o'erstepped the modesty of nature." Even lifting the eyes toward heaven, or pointing the finger toward it, or pressing the hand upon the heart, etc., though allowable, are sometimes carried too far, or too often repeated.

(2.) Gesture must never follow, and commonly must slightly precede, the emphatic word of the sentence.* It seems to be natural that excited feeling should find a more prompt expression in the instinctive movement, than in speech, which is the product of reflection.

(3.) Action must not be excessive, in frequency or in vehemence. To some subjects, occasions, or states of feeling in the speaker, it is natural that the action should be rare and slight. Too frequent gesture, like italics in writing and emphasis in speaking, gradually weakens its own effect. Extreme vehemence produces a revulsion of feeling in the hearer, a tendency to just the opposite of what the speaker desires. Hamlet says to the players: "Do not saw the air too much with your hand thus, but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness."

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* Whately, p. 445.

(4.) Avoid monotony. A certain unvarying round of postures and gestures, again and again repeated, is a somewhat common, and most grievous fault. Akin to it, though not yet so offensive, is the use, from mere habit, of some favorite gesture, when the emotion felt would be better expressed by some other. The noticeably frequent recurrence of a word, a tone, or a gesture is always a fault, and as soon as one becomes aware of it, should be carefully avoided.*

In conclusion, it is proper to repeat that at all hazards there must be life, freedom, power. Do not repress nature, though it must be governed; and do not force nature. Aim not at positive improvement in action, but negative — the correction of faults as they appear. Look out for such faults. Now and then ask some true and very judicious friend to apprise you of such as may have struck him. No one can be in this respect so helpful as an intelligent wife. Speak out freely and boldly what you feel. A man can never learn to perform any movement gracefully save by performing it, frequently and with great freedom. The vine must grow, or you cannot prune it. And let us not forget that even some of a man's faults, in action and in voice, may be a part of himself. Correct them wherever possible; but better let them remain, than be succeeded either by tameness or by artificiality.

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* Comp. as to variety of expression, Part III, chap. 4, end.

PART V.

CONDUCT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

§ 1. READING SCRIPTURE. § 2. HYMNS. § 3. PUBLIC PRAYER § 4. LENGTH OF SERVICES. § 5. PULPIT DECORUM. § 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

A TENDENCY may often be observed in our religious assemblies to neglect the worship, and think only of the preaching. Indeed, we frequently hear good men speak of the *preliminary* exercises. The devout reading of God's Word, sweet hymns of praise, and "prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving" — these, we must understand, are of no great importance, only the porch, the threshold! Straws show which way the wind blows, and the very form of public notices is here instructive. "Divine service will be held at St. Mark's Church, on next," etc. "The Rev. —— —— will preach at the Baptist (Presbyterian Methodist, etc.) Church, on next," etc. The Episcopal notice mentions only the service. The others mention only the preaching, and rarely fail to say who is to preach. Accordingly, Highchurchmen usually care little for the sermon, being mainly concerned that it should be suitably short; though evangelical Episcopalians lay much greater stress on preaching, and are often anxious for some liberty of omission in the service. The other denominations mentioned, too generally think little of the service, the worship. Some persons among them, dissatisfied with the felt lack of interest, imagine that there is no remedy save in having a "form of worship," or some approach to it; and accordingly one meets now and then with a Sunday-school or congregation reading alternate verses, or engaged in choral responses, etc., — some "entering wedge" for other things.

But the remedy lies elsewhere. The freedom, spontaneity, simplicity, spirituality, of New Testament worship must be maintained at all costs. The natural tendency of the human heart to make much of externals while devoid of spirituality, must by all means be resisted. So far as it is lack of devotional feeling on their part that makes men weary of informal modes of worship, so far we must beware of yielding. But the dissatisfaction is often caused, at least in part, by the coldness, lack of animation, want of connection, and general slovenliness which in so many cases mark our worship. We must pay far more attention to this than is common, both in the way of general cultivation and of preparation for each particular occasion. This is less necessary for those who have only to go through a form of service prepared by others, than for him who, on every separate occasion, is required to produce a service, for himself and for the congregation. Thoroughly simple in form, so as not to encourage the people to rest in externals, but full of interest, animation, devoutness, solemn sweetness, and with a specific but inelaborate adaptation to the occasion, — such should be our worship. That which is not interesting and impressive cannot be the full expression of warm devotion, and then the expression, by a general law, reacts upon the feeling. Externals, however they may appeal to æsthetic sentiment, can never create devotion; but animated and earnest expression will strengthen devotion, and this may be achieved while carefully avoiding the danger of formalism.

It is therefore deemed important to speak of the preacher's part in the conduct of public worship. This can only be done very briefly here, though the subject deserves minute discussion, and, in fact, a separate treatise.*

§ 1. READING SCRIPTURE.

1. In selecting the portion or portions of Scripture to be read, we should prefer such as are in a high degree devotional; e. g. many of the Psalms, passages from Isaiah and other Prophets, from the Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation. These will not only instruct, but will awaken devout feeling. The reading of them will naturally precede the principal prayer, whether immediately, or with the intervention of a hymn. The particular kind of devotional passages selected, and the general tone of the sermon, should harmonize. To read a mournful passage, and afterward preach a joyful sermon, or *vice versa*, would be inappropriate. Still, a general harmony is sufficient; great effort to find an exact correspondence is unnecessary, if not unbecoming.

But there are many cases in which the preacher wishes to read the connection of his text. If this connection is highly devotional in tone, it may be read at the usual point, as a part of the worship. If not, it should be read after the principal prayer, either before the second hymn or when announcing the text. In this case it is often well to read before the prayer some brief devotional passage, as a few verses from a psalm. Sometimes two different passages may be read in immediate succession. In all these details there is large liberty, and one need be no more bound by custom than by rubric. Good taste and devout feeling should govern, and there may be an interesting variety, without hunting after novelty. A good effect is sometimes produced by reading the connection of the text when just *closing* the sermon. In very many cases it is best not to read the connection at all, but to make a summary statement of it in opening the discourse.

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* The pastor's management as to the whole ordering of public worship, belongs only to works on Pastoral Duties; but the part which he himself performs, stands in immediate and almost inseparable connection with his work as a preacher, and may be regarded either as pertaining to Homiletics, or to the pastoral work in general. The best discussions are those of Hoppin, Shedd, and the German writers. See below for works on Hymns, and on Public Prayer.

The passages selected need not begin or end with a chapter. Some preachers seem to feel bound to read a whole chapter, however long, and only a chapter, however short. We have heretofore seen * that the current division into chapters is awkwardly made, often uniting matters which are wholly distinct, and dividing where there is a close connection. By quietly disregarding them whenever the sense requires, a preacher will help the effect of the service, and will accustom his hearers to look out for the real connection, in their own reading.

If the passage proposed contains expressions which now and to us seem indelicate, it may be either exchanged for another, or the portions in question omitted, where that can be done without attracting attention, and without material loss. In general such expressions should be read, and if so, then without the slightest hesitation, reserve, or manifestation of feeling. The beautiful air of unconsciousness seen in a refined woman, when she is led to hear or see something indelicate, is in all such cases the best model.

2. To read well, is a rare accomplishment. It is much more common to excel in singing, or in public speaking. Good preachers are numerous, compared with good readers. The requisites to good reading are several. One must have great quickness of apprehension, seizing the meaning of

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* Comp. Part I, chap. 2, § 2.

whole sentences at a glance; for one of the commonest faults is to begin reading a sentence with an expression which does not accord with its close; and in fact, the reader must throughout keep clearly in mind the entire connection, and read every sentence as part of a greater whole. This also shows the need of a familiar acquaintance with what is read, and if not with the language of the passage, at any rate with its subject-matter. A second requisite is sensibility, so as not only to understand, but promptly and thoroughly to sympathize with the sentiment. Probably this is oftener wanting than the former. There must also be great flexibility of voice, so as at once and exactly to express every varying shade of feeling. And finally, it requires ample and careful practice. But very few persons practise reading much at the critical period of life. In childhood, knowledge is too limited, the voice has too little power, and the details of pronunciation, etc., require too much attention, to admit of thoroughly good reading. Just at the time of opening maturity, when the mind is developed in strength and quick in its grasp, when the sympathies are wide and still sensitive, when the voice has reached nearly its full power and lost nothing of its flexibility, ought there to be thorough training, whether with or without instruction, in the noble art of reading. Careful exercise in reading ought to close the course of College study. If at College commencements, instead of the inevitable speech we could hear some graduates read — not with elocutionary display, and half-acting tricks, but simple, manly, genuine reading — it would be a pleasure and a profit to all concerned. A Reading Club in a village, especially if it includes both sexes,* will often be more profitable than a debating society. Instruction in reading is less hazardous than in public speaking, because the former is to some extent necessarily an artificial thing, and in reading there is somewhat less danger of corrupting nature and falling into wretched affectations.

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* Women, of equal culture and practice, will oftener read well than men; and this is not surprising when we note that women are usually quicker in apprehension, more sensitive in feeling and sympathy, and have greater flexibility of voice.

He who reads well, must of course be a master of correct pronunciation,* and must have acquired a distinct and easy articulation. Beyond these, everything is included in what we call *expression;* and power of expression, so far as it is not a natural gift, must be acquired by well-ordered practice. The practice ought usually to be in reading that with which he is well acquainted, and in full sympathy. Besides such reading for practice, one should embrace every fit occasion of reading for the pleasure and profit of those who hear — selecting something full of interest, so that he may forget himself in the sentiment. And preachers inclined to be lugubrious ought by all means to read in private some humorous selections, in order to maintain the equilibrium.

Among the different elements of expression in reading, two or three must be briefly mentioned. The first thing thought of is apt to be *emphasis;* and the first result of effort in this direction is usually a great amount of false emphasis. Besides the obvious fault of placing it on the wrong word, there is a subtler and very serious fault, which consists in failing properly to *distribute* the emphasis. Many men of ability and cultivation will throw the whole weight of emphasis upon a single word of the sentence or clause, when it ought to be divided, in different proportions, between two, or three, or several words. This point deserves special attention and practice, with mutual criticism on the part of friends. After all, the real difficulty about emphasis is in thoroughly comprehending the thought and feeling the sentiment of what we read; as is shown by the fact that we very rarely hear false emphasis in unrestrained conversation. It may be remarked that the Book of Proverbs presents numerous admirable examples for exercise in emphasis. Very many persons read all *interrogative* sentences with the peculiar expression at the close which is appropriate to questions expecting the answer yes or no. Thus: Did he say he would come? But there is a second class of questions which expect an answer, but not in the form of yes or no. Thus: Who said he would come? And in a third class no answer is expected; as, Will any one ever come and help me? The distinction is here very obvious, and never overlooked in conversation, but frequently in reading. — There should very rarely be any *gesture* in reading, beyond some natural movement of the head, together with expression of countenance. — The injunction often given by teachers, "read precisely as if you were talking," is not strictly correct. A sort of oratorical reading is strongly to be condemned, and it may be convenient to say, "read more as if you were talking," but the essential distinction between talking and reading should not, and in fact cannot, be destroyed.*

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* McIlvaine's Elocution, p. 239–93, has a full discussion of this subject, with many useful examples of common errors.

It is particularly important that the Scriptures should be well read. A comparatively small, and rapidly diminishing number of persons in our congregations are now necessarily dependent on public reading for their entire knowledge of Scripture, as was so common at first, when it was said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy." † But as a matter of fact, many persons do not read the Bible themselves, and their minds are brought in direct contact with it only by the public reading. On the other hand, those who read the Bible most at home, are often most pleased to hear it read in public worship. And in general, whatever reasons there are for reading anything well, apply pre-eminently to the book of all books, the Word of God. Good reading has an exegetical value, helping to make plain the sense. It also brings out the full interest, and impressiveness, of the passage read. There are passages which have had a new meaning for us, and an added sweetness, ever since we once heard them read, it may be long ago, by a good reader.*

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* Comp Part IV, chap. , § 1, 3.

† Rev. 1 : 3

But to read the Bible really well, is a difficult task. The common mode of printing the verses, often seriously obscures the connection. The proper names require attention, that we may pronounce them readily, correctly, and yet without pedantry.† Far more important is the lack of full intellectual and spiritual sympathy with Scripture, which so often prevents our entering fully into the sense. There is a common tendency to be subdued by mistaken reverence into a uniform tone, devoid of real expression The Bible should never be read precisely as we read other books. It is all sacred, and in reading even its less strikingly devotional parts there should be a prevailing solemnity; but this solemnity does not forbid a rich variety of expression, as many readers appear to imagine.

Different parts of the Bible also differ very widely in subject and style, and there must be a corresponding difference in the reading. There are *narrative* portions, varying from simple stories through many grades to the surpassingly pathetic or impassioned; *didactic* portions, of many kinds, as seen in our Lord's various discourses, in the precepts which everywhere abound, and in the elaborate and often passionate arguments of certain Epistles of Paul; and

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* See in Russell, p. 291–4, some good remarks on the importance of reading the Scriptures well.

† Never depart from the pronunciation of them which is common among educated people, unless there is something real to be gained by it

poetical portions, comprising the elevated imagery of prophetic description, both in the Old and in the New Testament, the poetical argument of Job and precepts of Proverbs, and the immense variety of lyrical passages, in the Psalms and elsewhere, presenting many phases of feeling, and often passing, in the same brief Psalm, from penitence to rejoicing and praise.* In fact, the Bible is not so much a single book as a library, containing almost every species of composition, and requiring to be read in almost every variety of manner.

One ought never to read a passage in public worship, without being *thoroughly* acquainted with it, and this will usually require that it be carefully gone over but a short time before

3. It was once a very common practice, and is still wisely retained in some quarters, to make in connection with the reading, explanatory and other remarks. These should not be so numerous or extensive as to usurp the attention due to the passage itself. They should aim to explain it, to awaken interest in it, occasionally to indicate some of its practical bearings, and especially to give it effect in exciting devotional feeling. If there has been thorough study of the passage, and if the preacher has taken pains to acquire skill in this respect, there may be brief, lively and yet devout remarks that will make this part of our public worship far more interesting and profitable. But random remarks, made without study and without skill, do but interrupt the reading, and are sometimes a sore drag upon its movement.

§ 2. HYMNS.

1. It is strange that some ministers should care so little

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* Russell, Pulpit Elocution, p. 295, has a partially similar classification, with some remarks upon the several classes, and some good specimens of each variety

for the proper selection of hymns. They surely do not consider the blessed power of sacred song, nor the fact that inappropriate and unimpressive hymns not only fail of doing good, but are positively chilling and painful. Some take their hymns at the first opening of the book, with no care to make them suit the general tone of the service. Others are solicitous that every hymn shall be upon precisely the subject discussed in the sermon, forgetting that hymns are designed not for instruction, but to express and quicken devotional feeling.

To succeed well in selecting, and also in reading hymns, one must understand the nature, and sympathize with the spirit of lyrical poetry — that is, of poetry suitable to be sung. Some men are so constituted as to do this with ease, but all will be benefited by making, as they may find opportunity, special study of the chief lyric poets, such as Pindar and Horace, Gœthe and Beranger, Burns and the Old English Ballads,* as well as good lyrics from many other sources. This will not only develop and refine the general taste for poetry, but the special taste for lyrics, which, besides their importance for our purpose, are among the highest and most potent forms that poetry can assume.†

The devout study of the Psalms, while pursued chiefly for higher purposes, will also give one a better comprehension of the spirit of Scripture poetry. And Christian hymns, of different ages and nations, exist in rich abundance, suited to advance personal piety, and at the same time to improve the critical appreciation of sacred lyrics, so that we may become able to select wisely. The most valuable of these are the Patristic and Mediæval Latin Hymns, the German and the English Hymns. The first are often disfigured by more or less of unsound teaching, many of them being addressed to the Virgin Mary or the Saints; yet even these have much that is of great value, while others, including some of the very finest, are almost entirely free from objectionable matter, and full of the noblest poetical and devout inspiration.* The German Hymns began to be composed at an earlier period, and are now more numerous than our own; and many of them are unsurpassed for rhythmical movement, and devotional sweetness.† English Hymns were very few before the time of Dr. Watts, early in the last century; but to the great number produced by him, and afterwards by Charles Wesley, copious additions have ever since continued to be made, till now we have a goodly heritage. All the recent hymn-books, particularly those issued by Congregationalists and by Baptists, are rich with beautiful and blessed hymns, though usually containing some that could be spared. The minister ought, by all means, whatever time and pains it may require, to make himself thoroughly familiar with his Hymn-book, in order to prepare him for prompt and judicious selection, to make him ready in that timely quotation from hymns, which adds more in preaching than quotation from any other source except the Bible, and to increase his personal piety. A delightful hour may sometimes be spent by friends in discussing the Hymn-book, comparing favorite hymns, reading specimens, and thus gaining critical knowledge, at the same time with devotional enjoyment and profit. It is also important to examine other collections than our own, to look out the original form of hymns from the older writers which have been altered, and others which modern works omit, as seen in Watts and Rippon, in the complete Poetical Works of Charles Wesley, etc. And there are inferior collections, containing some homely pieces which would be at once rejected by the critics, but which have such power with the people as to provoke inquiry, and often to reward it. One may also find it interesting to classify the principal writers of English hymns, according to the number and excellence of the hymns they have left us. The first class would doubtless contain Watts and Charles Wesley; the second probably Cowper, Montgomery, and Miss Steel; the third, John Newton, Doddridge, and Beddome; and then there would be a numerous class of those who have written one or a few hymns of the highest excellence.* The circumstances connected with the original production of a hymn are sometimes very interesting, and while it is seldom desirable to mention them when the hymn is about to be sung, they may sometimes be stated, with good effect, when it is quoted in a sermon.

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* The best collection easily accessible is Percy's Reliques, which may be had in cheap editions.

† Compare Shedd, p. 301–4.

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* There are convenient collections by Daniel and by Mone, and Trench has an entertaining little volume entitled Sacred Latin Poetry.

† Dr. P. Schaff has issued a German Hymn-Book, copious, and no doubt the result of careful selection.

The properties of a good hymn may be briefly stated as follows: (1) Correct in sentiment. Its general doctrine should be sound, which is not quite true of some popular hymns and songs and choruses,† and all its particular sentiments should be just. (2) Devotional in its spirit. Some, even of Beddome's hymns, are purely didactic, and not warm or moving. A good many hymns as to affliction, and as to heaven, present morbid or merely fanciful sentiment, altogether wanting in true devotional feeling. (3) Poetical in imagery and diction. Many hymns are only metrical prose, without any touch of genuine imagination, and sometimes employing words that are alien to the very genius of poetry. But a song which is not really poetical, lacks a vital element of power. Even when we chant unmetrical sentences, they must always be poetical in sentiment, the language of imagination and passion. (4) Rhythmical, being correct as to metre, animated and varied in movement, and yet not rugged or halting, but truly melodious.* (5) Symmetrical, the verses exhibiting a regular progress in thought, and forming a complete and harmonious whole. In a thoroughly good hymn it would not be possible to omit any verse, without destroying the sense. Still, there are many useful and even delightful hymns in which this is not the case, and when the exigencies of our worship require the omission of some verse or verses, much greater care should be taken than is sometimes observed, so to manage the omission as to leave the hymn still coherent and harmonious.†

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* Works on English Hymns, accessible and cheap, are those of Belcher, and Christopher, and an entertaining work entitled Evenings with the Sacred Poets.

† E. g. "I want to be an angel." Saved human beings are entirely distinct from angels, and occupy, in some respects, a position of higher dignity.

It is better that the first hymn sung should not relate to the precise subject of the sermon, but be emphatically a hymn of worship. Especially when the sermon is to the unconverted, must it be out of place to begin the solemn worship of God by a mere metrical exhortation to impenitent men. Of course this opening hymn, as well as every other part of the worship, should have a general harmony of tone with all that is to follow. The hymn immediately preceding the sermon will naturally be preparatory. The last hymn will apply the sermon, or express the sentiments which the subject presented ought to excite, or form a general conclusion to the services. And it should be constantly borne in mind that *specific* appropriateness to the subject of the sermon is far less important in a hymn than that it should be a truly good hymn, eminently pleasing, impressive, warm. As in the case of texts, it is very unwise to avoid the familiar hymns, for they have become familiar because they are singularly good.

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* See below as to rhythmical pauses.

† Numerous examples of faulty hymns which it would be instructive to examine, (as well as many of great excellence,) are found in the Olney Hymns (John Newton's Works).

2. Why should we read hymns at all, when they are about to be sung? Not only because many present, particularly in some parts of the country, will have no hymn-book,* but because the previous reading brings the mind into a certain sympathy with the sentiment, so that we enter into it more fully when it is sung, — somewhat for the same reason that makes us so apt to ask that a good song may be repeated. It follows that the reading ought to be animated and sympathetic. If a man cannot, or will not read otherwise than in a dull, languid, monotonous fashion, he had probably better omit the reading altogether. True, the overdone, oratorical manner of reading hymns is extremely objectionable. There should be no effort, nothing but natural feeling. But then if the hymn is a good one, worthy to be read and sung at all, and if the man knows it well, from general acquaintance or from thoughtful reading not long before, it will not be natural to read it otherwise than with life and warmth. To read in a calm and perfectly quiet manner, the words

"Jesus! I love thy charming name,
'T is music to mine ear,"

would be, for a truly devout man, well-nigh impossible.

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* For the same reason it is still proper, in some places, as it was once very common, to "give out" the hymn, two lines at a time. Alas! there are not a few localities in which many white as well as colored people cannot read, and giving out is a great comfort to them. Better annoy the chief singers a little, than despise our weak brethren, and rob them of a share in this delightful part of the worship.

In fact, as to all expression of feeling, cultivated people are more apt fastidiously to shrink back, than to transcend the limits of propriety.

Similar considerations will show that the rhythm of hymns must never be disregarded. The sing-song fashion of reading verse, often observed in ignorant men, and the monotonous inflections, regularly reproduced at the end of the first, second, third and fourth lines by many educated men, are one evil; but it is going grievously to the other extreme if a man attempts, as some actually avow, to read verse as if it were prose. The sense is predominant; but to neglect the rhythm is both to lose part of the beauty and impressiveness of the hymn, and to offend by the conspicuous absence of what is naturally expected and demanded. Especially must we observe the rhythmical pause at the end of every line; not letting the voice drop, nor take the falling inflection, unless the sense so requires; but even where the sense goes right on, we should make a slight pause, with the voice suspended, in recognition of the rhythmical close. In all lines of any considerable length, there is also an equally important pause somewhere about the middle of the line, the varied position of which greatly contributes to the rhythmical effect. Those who have not studied the classic caesura, may, without embarrassing themselves with technicalities, easily learn to perceive the position of this pause, by privately reading many lines with a view to it, especially by exaggerating, at first, the rhythmical movement, making even a sing-song. Sometimes there are two such pauses, one near the beginning, the other towards the end, of the line. These rhythmical pauses are too often neglected, though a man of good ear for music will frequently observe them unconsciously. And yet they may be mastered with comparative ease.*

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* Many good examples are given in the Appendix to Lord's Laws

Not a little may also be gained from the study of English metres, particularly those common in hymns. A man's ear may for the most part carry him through, but it must often fail. There are exceedingly few persons who read verse without frequent faults, unless they have attended to its metrical structure. The task of learning the metres of our hymns is not difficult,* and to classify them into the somewhat numerous varieties of Iambic, Trochaic, (with combinations of the two,) Anapaestic, and (in a few specimens) Dactylic verse, will be to some persons a pleasant amusement, by no means devoid of profit. It is in reading Anapaestic hymns, many of which are extremely beautiful, that faults are most frequently observed.

It will of course greatly increase a man's skill in reading hymns, and will especially serve to correct a tendency to be dolorous or monotonous, if he will often read aloud from secular verse. It would help many a preacher with his Common Metre hymns, now and then to read to some friends, with full life and spirit, Cowper's John Gilpin.

It is curious to see how old customs are maintained, after the occasion for them has ceased to exist. When even the leader of the singing had no hymn-book, it was necessary to announce beforehand the *metre* of the hymn; and this is still regularly and most formally done by many Baptist and Methodist ministers, where there is no possible need for it. So in "giving out," the minister would, after reading over the hymn, then read the first two lines, to be

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of Figurative Language, and in Russell's Pulpit Elocution. There is also a good discussion, chiefly with reference to heroic verse, in Kames' Elements of Criticism.

* They may be studied with advantage in Angus' Hand-book of the English Tongue, Quackenbos' Composition and Rhetoric, and to some extent in almost any treatise on Composition or on Grammar. There is also a book on English Metres, (or some such title,) by Everett.

sung; and where giving out has long been abandoned, often still the minister will repeat the first two lines in the same way. If it is desired to revive the impression of the opening words, this is lawful, but will frequently be better accomplished by reading again simply the first line, or in other cases the whole verse.

3. With reference to the music of hymns, it is proper here to make only a brief remark. The superiority of congregational singing is beyond question. Yet it seems generally necessary to have a choir, whose proper function is to lead the singing of the congregation, but whose well-known tendency is to usurp the whole. Hence result great evils, sadly familiar to us all. Now the preacher is the proper mediator between choir and congregation. If a lover of music, especially if able to sing well by note, he may keep the sympathies of the choir, and may induce them, not by public but private requests, to sing for the most part familiar tunes; and then an occasional public and private exhortation to the people, to take part in the singing, will effect the best arrangement that is usually practicable. Friendly conference with the leader of the singing might also secure a better adaptation of tune to hymn than is often observed.

§ 3. PUBLIC PRAYER.*

The prayers form the most important part of public worship. He who leads a great congregation in prayer, who undertakes to express what they feel, or ought to feel, before God, to give utterance to their adoration, confession, supplication, assumes a very heavy responsibility. We all readily agree, and sometimes partially realize, that it is a solemn thing to speak to the people for God; is it less so when we speak to God for the people? Whatever preparation is possible for performing this duty, ought surely to be most carefully made. And yet, while very few now question the propriety of preparation, both general and special, for the work of preaching, it is feared the great majority still utterly neglect to prepare themselves for the conduct of public prayer.

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* See on this subject, besides the German writers and Hoppin, Porter's Homiletics, Dabney's Sac. Rhet. (Richmond, 1870), and Miller's Volume on Public Prayer

The *general* preparation for leading in public prayer consists chiefly in the following things: (1) Fervent piety. This will include the habit of praying in private, and in social meetings. If it be true that "the only way to learn to preach is to preach," it is still more emphatically true that the only way to learn to pray is to pray. And while some do tolerate preaching for practice, all will utterly condemn praying for practice. It is thus plain that no one will regularly pray well in public, who does not pray much and devoutly in private. Along with this it may be observed, that in every attempt to pray, under whatever circumstances, one should earnestly endeavor to *realize what he is doing.* (2) Familiarity with Scripture, both as furnishing topics of prayer, and supplying the most appropriate and affecting language of prayer. The minister should be constantly storing in his memory the more directly devotional expressions found everywhere in the Bible, and especially in the Psalms and Prophets, the Gospels, Epistles and Revelation. Perhaps a few men err, in making their prayers consist of an almost uninterrupted succession of long quotations; but this is uncommon, and most of us greatly need in our prayers a larger and more *varied* infusion of Scripture language. (3) Study of instructive specimens of prayer. In the Bible there are found, besides the numerous single devotional expressions, various striking examples of connected and complete prayers, and very many instances in which the substance of a prayer is given though not the form. These ought to be carefully studied, for instruction in the matter and the manner of praying. Some of the long-established liturgies are also very instructive. However earnestly we may oppose the imposition of any form of prayer, there is certainly much to be learned from studying forms prepared with the greatest care, and in most cases by very able and very devout men. More modern works, as collections of prayers, and those recorded in diaries, will also repay occasional examination. In all such study of prayers, great pains must be taken not to lose the devotional in the merely critical spirit.

The *special* preparation which ought to be made for prayer on any given occasion, may be best understood by considering public prayer as to its *matter*, *arrangement*, *language*, and *utterance*.*

1. As to the *matter*, prayers will be very general and comprehensive, or very specific, according to circumstances. The simple and wonderfully comprehensive prayer given by our Lord as a model in the Sermon on the Mount, and afterwards repeated in a much shortened form,† which is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, is a specimen of the former kind, while to the latter belongs the prayer in the 17th chapter of John. In both directions we often witness grave errors. Some prayers are so general as to include

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* It will be seen that these divisions correspond to the four leading parts of the present work, as a treatise on Preaching. A friend suggests that an Essay might be appropriately written on what should be styled "The Homiletics of Public Prayer."

† See any of the recently revised texts, in Greek or English. The omission of several important clauses on this second occasion (Luke 11 : 2–4,) and the alteration of some expressions, prove conclusively that this was not meant by our Lord as a *form* of prayer, for on that supposition we should have him failing to repeat the form correctly. Notice how much is omitted in the corrected text of Luke.

almost everything, and thus to have no point. A prayer ought never to be indefinite and straggling, but should always have certain well-defined topics; and these should, when practicable, be determined beforehand. Other persons enter into such minute details as to be inconsistent with the character of a prayer suited to a whole assembly, and sometimes to be indecorous.

Too many persons wholly omit, in public prayer, or mention only in a few conventional phrases before closing, those great subjects of supplication which lie apart from their own immediate concerns. Yet in the "Lord's Prayer" these subjects occupy half the space, and the first half. Prayer for Missions, at home and abroad, for the increase of laborers, for Sunday-schools, and other such objects, ought frequently to occur — sometimes one of them being dwelt on, and sometimes another.

It is often and justly urged that we must not, in praying, undertake to instruct God. Yet this idea must not be carried too far. Our Lord, in the prayer of John 17, states what he has been doing, and explains how eternal life is attained. It is therefore proper sometimes to recite occurrences, or make statements, provided they become the occasion of thanksgiving or petition. Again, prayer must not be used as a medium for exhorting the people, as is often half unconsciously done. Nor must it contain complimentary allusions. To pray for another minister present, with elaborate compliment, is a sadly frequent, and grossly improper practice. Robert Hall erred in praying too often for distinguished persons present. So with allusions to "this large and intelligent congregation." Of course there may be prayer for particular classes of persons, and sometimes for individuals; but no compliments. Allusions to political questions, or any matters which are occasioning strife in the community, can be justified only by peculiar circumstances and mode of handling.

Special pains should be taken to give to public prayer the requisite variety — in topics, as well as in order. Many preachers pray uniformly for the same objects, and where they also follow a fixed order, and use many stereotyped phrases, it becomes pretty much a form of prayer, without the advantage of having been eminently well prepared. Much may be done towards securing variety by inquiring beforehand what petitions would be suggested by the occasion, or by the subject of the sermon, or by the passage of Scripture just read, or the hymn which has been sung. Of the topics which must of necessity be frequently introduced, some may be elaborated on one occasion, and some on another. In these, and many such ways, variety may be gained. Of course there should be no straining after it, nor any elaborateness in the prayer, of whatsoever kind.

Any attempt to catalogue or classify the materials of prayer would be here inappropriate.

2. The *arrangement* of prayer must not be formal, but there should always be a real order. It is not necessary, if desirable, that this should descend to details. The leading topics must not only be chosen, as we have seen, but arranged in the mind beforehand. All the arguments we have urged in favor of arrangement in preaching, apply, more or less, to order in prayer.*

The order which seems to be usually thought most appropriate, may be stated as follows: (1) Invocation, adoration, thanksgiving. (2) Confession, and prayer for forgiveness. (3) Renewed dedication, and prayer for help. (4) Intercession, for all general or special objects. Beginning with the thought of God's character and mercies, we are naturally led to think next of our own sins; and hence the order named. But adoration may also naturally be followed by prayer that God may be known and adored

*See Part II, chap. 1.

over all the earth, (see the Lord's Prayer,) and reference to ourselves, whether thanksgiving or supplication, be introduced afterwards. Or the very first words, after addressing God, may be a confession of sin, and a cry for mercy. Moreover, something peculiar in the occasion, something known to be pressing upon the hearts of the worshippers, may demand a great departure from the usual order, as well as the usual selection, of topics. We must avoid the two extremes, of wandering hither and thither, and of stiff, formal, unchangeable order. Within these limits, one may be guided by judgment and taste, by feeling and the occasion.*

3. The *language* of prayer must, of course, be grammatical, and free from all vulgarisms and oddities. It should be thoroughly simple, — not low and coarse, but not learned or inflated. We must avoid elaborateness, and prettiness, which is extremely offensive to good taste and painful to truly devout feeling, but must not avoid, when deeply affected, the natural language of emotion, which is apt to be figurative, and sometimes very highly figurative. Where this is really natural, it will never strike one as finery. It is one of the poorest compliments that can be paid a man to say, that he made an "eloquent" prayer earnest, fervent, solemn, deeply impressive — such are the terms to be desired, if indeed a prayer is complimented at al

Almost all who lead in prayer come to have pet phrases, whether they were originally imitated, or have only grown habitual. It is very well that the prayer of another should suggest to us topics or sentiments we had never introduced, but to borrow phrases in prayer is in wretched taste, and even unconscious borrowing should by every possible means be avoided. Yet one hears certain favorite phrases all over the country, which must have been adopted by imitation. Sometimes they involve an image, as, "Stop them in their mad career;" or an alliteration, as, "Choose all our changes for us," "Touch and tender their hearts" (which is bad English); or a big word, instead of homely Saxon, as, "And ultimately save us," where "at last" would be simpler and better. Examples cannot be multiplied, though the evil is extremely common, and very hurtful. The use of such phrases seems to show that the mind is occupied with the mere externals of prayer, instead of being engrossed with devout feeling. Even where expressions are not borrowed, but have merely become habitual, their too frequent recurrence is still more objectionable in prayer than in preaching.

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* As to the length of prayers, see below, § 4.

Many are constantly repeating Oh! and Ah! or O Lord! or "We pray thee," "We beseech thee," and the like.

Familiar language, such as the mystics use, "my Jesus," "sweet Lord," had better be avoided.

The phrases used in addressing God will naturally be chosen with some reference to the connection. Thus our Lord says, "I thank thee, O Father, *Lord of heaven and earth,* that thou hast hid these things," etc. It is an act of sovereignty. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is natural, rather than, "Shall not the Almighty [the All-wise, or the merciful God] do right?"

In employing the language of Scripture, as already recommended, it is quite important to quote correctly; and it is curious to observe the incorrect quotations which are heard in widely distant States, showing that they have been learned by oral tradition. "Where two or three . . . . there am I in the midst of them, *and that to bless them.*" The words in italics are an addition. "Thou canst not look upon sin *with the least degree of allowance,*" spoils a forcible and beautiful image. "That the word of the Lord may have free course, *run,* and be glorified," adds from the margin the word "run," there suggested as a possible substitute for "have free course." "The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," is a curious change from "sin."

4. The *utterance* of prayer "should be softer, more level, ... less vehement, more subdued. Every tone should breathe tenderness and supplication..... It is difficult to say which is most unsuitable to this sacred exercise — a hurried, perfunctory utterance, as of one who reads some tiresome or trivial matter, a violent and declamatory manner, as though one had ventured upon objurgation of his Maker, or a headlong and confused enunciation." *

The utterance must by all means be distinct — not boisterous, but perfectly audible throughout the room. It is very painful, and somewhat common, to be unable to hear. As to the precise tones to be employed, let one strive to realize what he is doing, and then speak simply as he feels, unless he becomes conscious of special faults. Some men are given to the use of a lugubrious tone, which does not belong to the natural language of penitence and love, and is sometimes ridiculous. The tone should, of course, be solemn and reverential, rather than familiar, but that does not require it to be "mournful."

We must also avoid contortions of countenance, and tricks of posture and gesture, which there will always be some persons to notice.

§ 4. LENGTH OF THE SERVICES.

The proper length will depend very much upon circumstances. Two centuries ago it was not uncommon, both in the Church of England and among Dissenters, to occupy from three to six hours. At present there is in many quarters a great impatience of long services, which should be neither yielded to nor disregarded. In the country, where people ride or walk some distance, and have but one service a day, it may be much longer than in town. When some particular occasion demands unusual length, and will make the services interesting throughout, they may be prolonged beyond the usual time. In general, while the customs of the place and the known preferences of the congregation are to be consulted, we must not allow them to bind us with iron fetters. There should be freedom, and some variety, so as to withstand the perpetual tendency to gravitate into formalism. Many persons regard custom as a sort of common law, more binding than an authoritative form of worship. Against this the minister may practically protest by such occasional variations as seem appropriate, taking care not to shock by abrupt or singular changes. There can be little of free, spontaneous life, where it is cramped by unvarying forms, whether they be fixed by statute or by custom. But innovation merely for the sake of novelty, is worse than useless.

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* Dabney, Sac. Rhetoric, p. 358.

As to the length of a sermon, it would be well for a pastor to get it understood that he may sometimes make the sermon very short, and sometimes quite long. There are subjects which can be made very interesting and instructive for twenty minutes, but to occupy thirty or forty minutes it would be necessary to introduce matter really foreign and calculated to lessen the effect, or so to hammer out the style as to make it less impressive. Many a preacher has thought of subjects or texts of precisely this description, and has been compelled either to abandon them, or to spoil them in one of the ways indicated. Why not occasionally preach a very short sermon, of twenty, or even of fifteen minutes? In that case, if circumstances warrant, the other services might, without remark, be made longer than usual, pains being taken to render them interesting and impressive. On the other hand, there are subjects which imperatively demand an extended treatment, and cannot well be divided; and the preacher, especially when at home, ought to feel at liberty to occupy a full hour, or in rare cases even more, provided he is sure the sermon will have such a variety of distinct points, such stirring movement from beginning to end, and such sustained energy of delivery, as will keep the people interested in a high degree. Within these limits, the proper average in towns, will probably be from thirty to forty-five minutes, the former being best where the habitual mode of treating a subject is condensed and concentrated, the latter where it is more discursive and varied. It is obvious that much depends on the mode of treatment. A long sermon may seem short, a short one may be "tedious-brief," like the scene of Pyramus and Thisbe.

The prayers are very commonly made too long. The people cannot avoid becoming weary. It would be better to have a greater number of prayers during the service, and have them shorter. In general, there may be three prayers, but varying in length according to circumstances. The invocation, which opens the services — following the voluntary anthem from the choir or voluntary hymn from the congregation — is usually and properly short, but might sometimes be made longer upon occasion. The principal prayer, which is followed by the sermon, is especially liable to become too long. The last prayer, after the sermon, ought to vary widely in length. If the preacher, or some other who is called on, feels deeply moved, and if the services have not been unusually long, this prayer may be considerably extended. If not, it should be short, sometimes very short. Even where the sermon has made a great impression, the particular character of that impression and of the subject must determine whether it had better be followed by a long prayer or a short one. It is sometimes well to let a hymn follow the sermon, and then close with a benediction. Or, without a hymn, the benediction may follow at once. In either case the benediction, which is nothing but a short prayer, may be preceded by a few sentences of other prayer, appropriate to the subject which has been presented.

In general, as has been intimated, the different parts of the service, reading Scripture, singing, preaching, prayer, should vary in length according to circumstances, one part being made longer when another is shorter, with no straining after sensational novelty, but with the variety which unrestricted feeling naturally prompts.

§ 5. PULPIT DECORUM.

It is wonderful how much harm is sometimes done by trifling acts of indecorum in the pulpit. If the preacher, especially a young man, is seen arranging his hair or his neck-tie, it will utterly prejudice some persons against his sermon. If his dress is slovenly, or showy, it will have a similar effect. If he is seen or heard taking a chew of tobacco, or even a glass of water, while another prays after his sermon, or hunting up hymns while another prays before it, we can hardly wonder that people are offended. Two ministers should not talk together during the singing, unless there is peculiar occasion for it. To look about carelessly before beginning the services, betokens a mind little occupied with sacred things. Yet it is far from desirable to substitute an elaborate solemnity of air. And the practice of kneeling upon entering the pulpit, is of very doubtful propriety. The preacher ought to pray before beginning his solemn duties, but had he not better offer his prayer in private than in public?

The following picture has become famous:

> "Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
> Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own—
> Paul should himself direct me. I would trace

His master strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere:
In doctrine uncorrupt: in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture. Is it like? Like whom?
The things that mount the rostrum with a skip
And then skip down again; pronounce a text;
Cry — hem; and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene!"*

A preacher should never exhibit irritation at inattention, or even at misconduct, in the audience. When it is really necessary to rebuke, and to rebuke sharply, it ought to be manifest that he is not resenting a personal slight, but affected by higher motives. And in the great majority of cases, public rebukes are better omitted. They often give offence, and the good they do might usually be reached in some other way. A kind, but decided word in private is commonly much better. Few preachers have ever had occasion to regret that they had been silent, when moved to public rebuke; many have regretted that they spoke.

There should be nothing self-important, or formal, in the preacher's manner. It is generally better to say "I" than to use the royal "we," the plural of majesty. There may be more egotism in the latter case than the former. To avoid the too frequent recurrence of the first person singular, the preacher may often associate himself with the hearers, and then say "we."

After great excitement, in the pulpit or elsewhere, there is apt to be a corresponding reaction. But many persons fail to understand how a man who was so solemn during the sermon, is now so light. Men of excitable nature should avoid exhibiting the effect of this reaction. How foolish soever people may be in criticizing trifles, we must not leave them, as to such minor matters, an excuse for finding fault.

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* Cowper on Pulpit Proprieties. Comp. Kidder, Hom. p 378 ff

§ 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

After all our preparation, general and special, for the conduct of public worship and for preaching, our dependence for real success is on the Spirit of God. And where one preaches the gospel, in reliance on God's blessing, he never preaches in vain. The sermon meant for the unconverted may greatly benefit believers, and *vice versa.* Without the slightest manifest result at present, a sermon may be heard from long afterwards; perhaps only in eternity And the most wretched failure, seeming utterly useless, may benefit the preacher himself, and through him, all who afterwards hear him. Thus we partially see how it is that God's Word always does good, always prospers in the thing whereto he sent it.

Nor must we ever forget the power of character and life to reinforce speech. What a preacher *is*, goes far to determine the effect of what he *says.* There is a mediæval proverb, *Cujus vita fulgor, ejus verba tonitrua.* If a man's life be lightning, his words are thunders.

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